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JOHN McCAIN, THE PRESUMPTIVE —Yuval Levin, Ramesh Ponnuru, The Editors

NATIONAL REVIEW

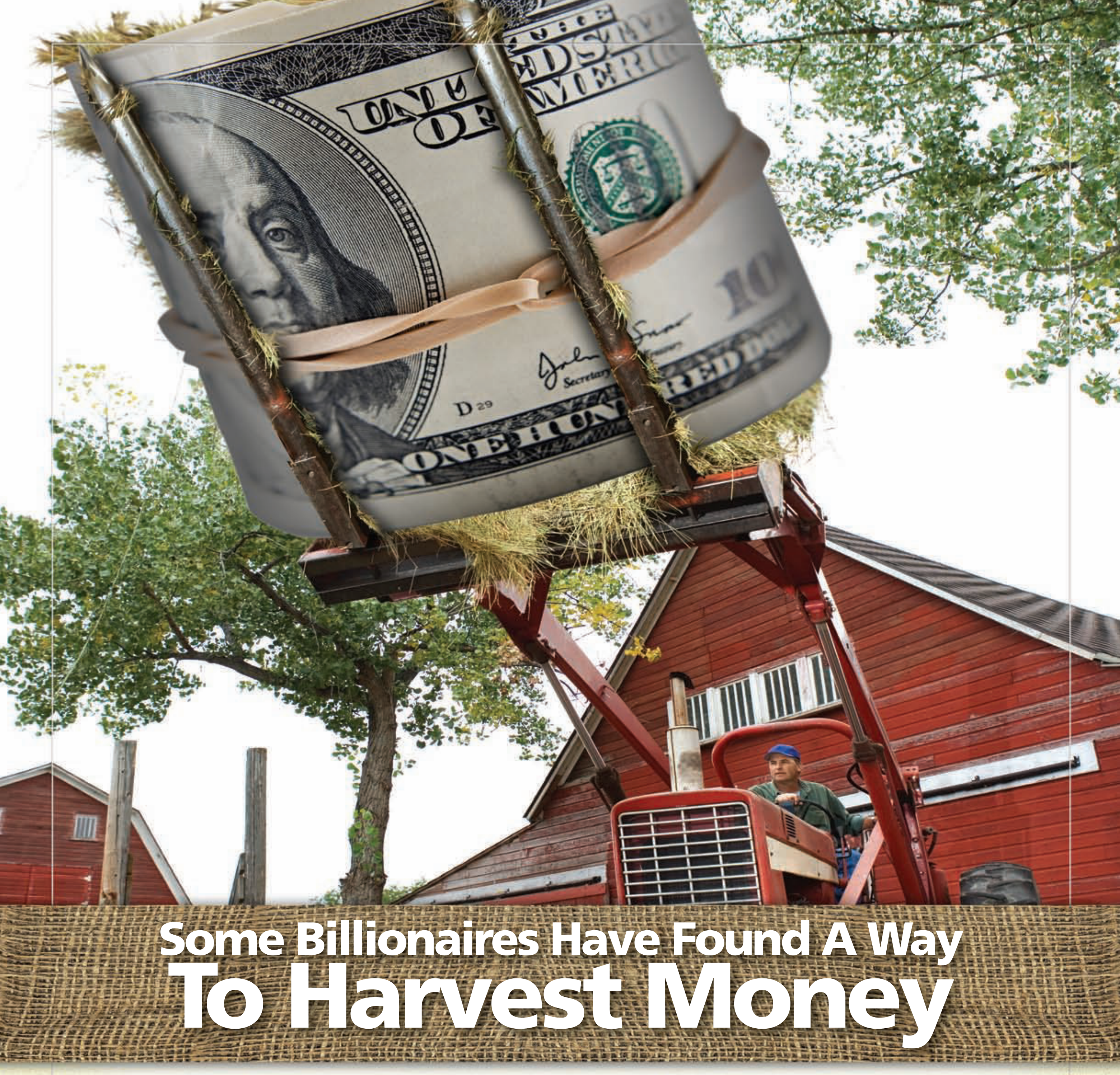
Please Nominate This ~~Woman~~ Couple

RICHARD LOWRY & KATE O'BEIRNE

No, Nominate Obama–Seriously

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

www.nationalreview.com



Some Billionaires Have Found A Way To Harvest Money

Agriculture commodity prices are soaring, setting record high food prices, but **some in Congress are ready to unfairly burden hard-working Americans with a tax hike and budget-busting gimmicks to subsidize wealthy farmers.**

The USDA reports that two-thirds of farm aid goes to the wealthiest 10% of farms. And with no income caps, billionaires like Ted Turner, David Rockefeller, Sr. and Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen have received government subsidies. Even David Letterman received a taxpayer-funded check – and that's no joke.

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FEBRUARY 25, 2008 VOL. LX, NO. 3

NATIONAL REVIEW

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■ COVER STORY

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Say a Prayer for Hillary

Hillary Clinton has earned the vocal disapproval of the liberal elite; if she wins the nomination, she will be forced to court the party's angry-Left base at a time when she would be better served by reaching out to the center; she has used Bill as an obvious crutch, weakening her own image; and her feminist allies have made it clear they will do all they can to define her candidacy as an exercise in vintage 1970s-style feminism. For Republicans, the choice is clear: Go Hillary! *By Richard Lowry & Kate O'Beirne*

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COVER: *Joe Raedle/Getty*

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letters to the editor

THAT OLD-TIME PRESERVATION

In criticizing National Heritage Areas ("An Ugly Heritage," January 28), John J. Miller appears to be condemning all preservation efforts. While his critique of the National Trust has merit, he gives the impression, if only by omission, that all preservation groups are anti-growth, obstructionist, and in pursuit of land-use control.

This is untrue. The Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT), an organization of more than 70,000 students of the Civil War and of which I am a member, seeks out and acts to preserve battlefield lands that are threatened by development. It identifies such hallowed grounds and either buys the land or acquires preservation easements. This is done primarily with private funds. When federal or state money is available, it is strictly on the basis of matching funds, so that in every case the acquisition depends on private largesse.

CWPT has played a crucial role in preserving our heritage. It has, for example, been material in the prevention of a Disney theme park that was proposed at Manassas, of a racetrack on the Brandy Station battlefield, and of a major industrial park on the Chancellorsville battlefield; and it has acquired major acreage on threatened battleground sites in Fredericksburg and suburban Richmond.

Mr. Miller in particular cites opposition to the expansion of a highway that he asserts is near but not on the Chancellorsville battlefield. If I am correct, the highway in question would be Virginia Route 3, a road that follows almost exactly the old Orange Turnpike, which runs through the heart of the battlefield. Its expansion to four lanes and the concomitant traffic would have been devastating.

James G. Pastorius
Richmond, Va.

JOHN J. MILLER RESPONDS:
My article doesn't mention the Civil War Preservation Trust—but it's no surprise that a pessimistic critique of National Heritage Areas would raise the hackles of the CWPT. Its president, Jim Lighthizer, sits on the board of the Journey Through Hallowed Ground NHA, which is an ambitious and controversial plan to slow down economic development by way of zoning laws that would restrict the property rights of citizens. That may be okay with liberals, but conservatives should insist on historic preservation done the old-fashioned way: purchasing land and buildings and protecting them, rather than urging the government to regulate other people's property.

ST. ALFRED PRUFROCK

In his review of *Lapham's Quarterly* ("A Knave and His Index," February 11), Roger Kimball quotes Lewis Lapham as saying that St. Augustine "formulated his notion of Christian morality as a response to his having been sorely tempted by a peach." Mr. Kimball cites this as another of Lapham's pretentious sneers, but it's also an example of his ignorance. As I recall it, St. Augustine's fruit-related spiritual crisis occurred in connection with pears—which he stole as a boy from his neighbor's tree.

Martin Andrucki
Lewiston, Maine

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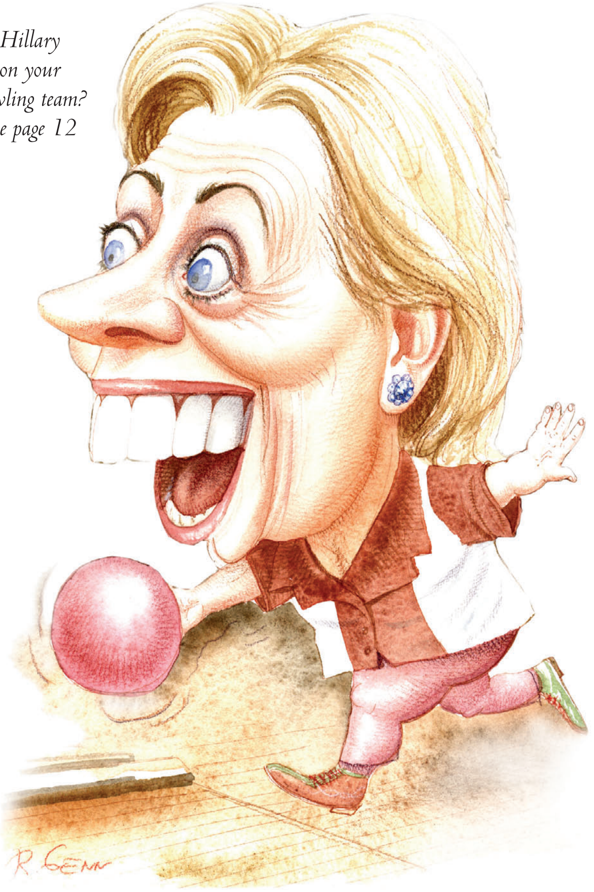
THE WEEK

■ Well, at least his team won the Super Bowl.

■ Rudy Giuliani bowed out after a weak third-place finish in Florida, his self-defined must-win state. Unavoidable liabilities and a bad strategy combined to undo him. Giuliani always had baggage: his longtime support of abortion; his hostility to gun ownership and his open-borders rhetoric (both souvenirs of his days as mayor). He had tacked right here and there, pledging most notably to nominate judges like John Roberts and Sam Alito. But he had to prove that he had converted—or argue that his strengths on other issues made conversion unnecessary. Betting the house on Florida denied him the opportunity to do so. The endless Republican debates were not enough to get such a message out; he needed to be in the trenches even in states he was bound to lose (pro-life Iowa, gun-toting New Hampshire). He leaves behind a city grateful for his eight years in office and a nation grateful for his last four months.

■ Taps sounded for John Edwards in South Carolina, a state he had won in 2004; this time he came in third. When Edwards looked at the world, he saw only his youth in mill towns, an experience of poverty that he believed was emblematic of postmodern America. But when voters looked at Edwards, too many of them—even Democrats—saw only the polish and prettiness of a man grown wealthy by making demagogic appeals to juries. Edwards parlayed the slimmest of résumés—one term as a senator from North Carolina—into two runs for a presidential nomination and one run for the vice presidency. All failed. Perhaps in retirement he will go back to electorates of twelve, where he has had his only consistent successes.

■ In a column, John Fund of the *Wall Street Journal* made a passing reference to a meeting Senator McCain recently had with conservatives. He told those conservatives that as president he would try to nominate justices similar to John Roberts—but perhaps not similar to Samuel Alito, who was, he apparently suggested, too controversial. This story adds to the concerns many conservatives have about McCain as nominator in chief. On one hand, the senator voted for Alito, as he voted for Roberts, Thomas, and Scalia. On the other, he has never shown great interest in judicial issues, and advertises his indifference to the social issues with which they are often linked. His participation in the "Gang of 14" deal on filibusters of nominees shows an inclination to compromise with the Democrats on judges. Compromise may sometimes be called for. But conservative judicial appointments are a popular issue for Republicans, as well as the right thing to do. McCain has been saying that he will try to nominate "strict constructionists," and he now has an impressive list of advisers who can help him to do that. It's up to him to demonstrate that he is also willing to fight for such nominees.



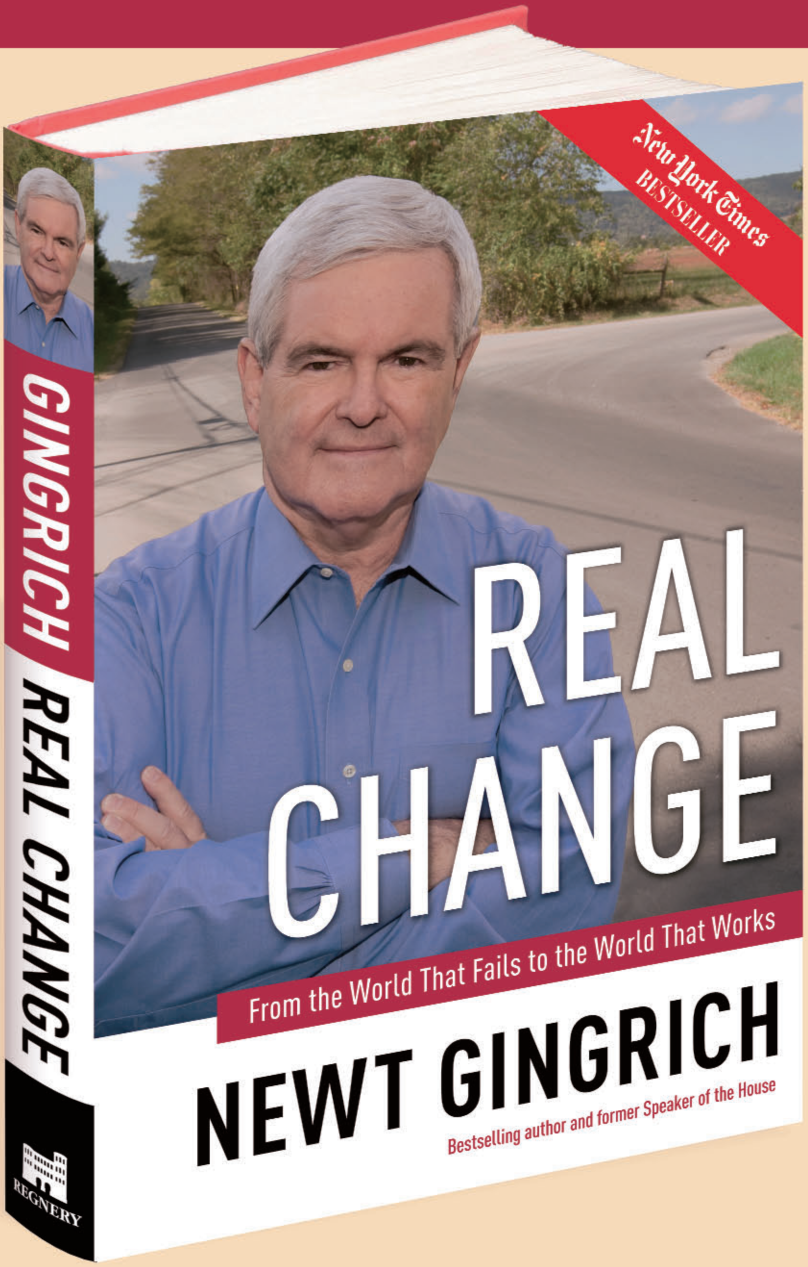
Hillary
on your
bowling team?
See page 12

ROMAN GENN

■ Mitt Romney brings out the worst in John McCain. McCain could have pointed out that he had fought tirelessly for the surge for years while Romney was hedging his bets. That would have been a reasonable point, and a powerful one. Instead, McCain had to go farther and hit Romney for allegedly having backed a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq. It wasn't true, but McCain kept saying it. Even the press, which likes McCain and scorns Romney, called the senator on his unstraight talk. In debates, McCain has snarled that Romney laid people off, said that he himself has been motivated by patriotism instead of profit, and explained that greedy people need to be punished. Perhaps the senator should get in touch with his policy advisers, who have made a corporate tax cut the centerpiece of his economic agenda. McCain is a graceless frontrunner, so perhaps it is for the best that, if he is the nominee, he will not be one much longer.

What Could Make 85% of Americans Vote Republican?

Real Change.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> — *Sean Hannity*

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THE WEEK...

■ For many conservatives, nothing about John McCain sticks in the throat so immovably as the yoking of his name with Edward Kennedy's in the 2005 immigration bill. McCain-Kennedy never came to a vote, but it formed the basis for subsequent bills in 2006 and 2007, all offering amnesty to illegal residents, all keenly supported by McCain. The candidate swears he has seen the light now, and will properly supervise enforcement of existing immigration laws. One strong reason to doubt his sincerity is his hiring, and subsequent defense, of former Mexican cabinet officer Juan Hernandez, a propagandist for the most egregious kind of ethnocentric multiculturalism. Sample Hernandez quote: "I want the third generation [of Mexican-ancestry Americans], the seventh generation, I want them *all* to think 'Mexico first.'" Sr. Hernandez denies that there are any criminals among our Mexican-immigrant population. He has at various times excused or denied the stealing of Social Security numbers by illegal immigrants. He told Tom Tancredo that the United States and Mexico are "not two countries . . . just a region." McCain says he now understands his critics' concerns about American sovereignty and the enforcement of the law. If that is true, he will fire this aide.

CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY

■ "We need to rethink and decriminalize our marijuana laws," Barack Obama said in his maiden run for the U.S. Senate in 2004. That was a noteworthy statement, for decriminalization is a rare position among practicing politicians. After the *Washington Times* exhumed the statement, the Obama campaign decided they needed more practice. "If you're convicted of a crime," a spokesman said, "you should be punished" (though not for "very long periods of time"). The candidate of change.

■ Hillary Clinton's endlessly recalibrated position on providing driver's licenses for illegal aliens captures her career in miniature. After arguing that a New York proposal to give illegals driver's licenses "makes a lot of sense," she promptly denied having said such a thing, gave an incomprehensible and classically Clintonian non-answer to the question at the Democratic debate in Philadelphia, and now offers this gem of an explanation: "I do not think it is appropriate to give a driver's license to someone who is here undocumented, putting them frankly at risk, because that is clear evidence that they are not here legally." To repeat: Clinton opposes licenses for illegals because such documents might provide evidence for American law-enforcement agencies. As first lady, she garnered valuable experience in hiding evidence of wrongdoing, but we never expected she'd make a policy proposal out of doing so.

■ Twenty-eight House Republicans are retiring, a factoid widely seen to spell doom for the Republicans' chances of taking back the House or even keeping their current strength. There is some truth to that analysis. But some of those retirees are from very Republican districts, and it will take little effort to elect Republican replacements. Some of the congressmen, such as the scandal-plagued John Doolittle of California, have made it easier for Republicans to hold their seats by stepping aside. When the Republicans took Congress in 1994, more Democrats than Republicans decided to call it quits before the next election. But Democrats still picked up seats in that next election. Some Republicans may be quitting their seats, but the party shouldn't give up on retaking the House.

■ The point of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act was to restrain surveillance within our borders. The government must go to a secret FISA court and prove that its target is legitimate before it can wiretap. Last year, however, a FISA-court decision required judicial authorization even when the target of wiretapping is outside the country. In response, Congress passed the Protect America Act last August, nullifying that decision. But Democrats set the act to expire in six months. President Bush wants to make the act permanent, and to streamline the procedures for seeking a wiretap. He also wants to protect telecom companies from being sued over their cooperation with surveillance programs after September 11. (They were assured at the time that those programs were legal.) Some Democrats are resisting these reforms because they want the FISA court to have more authority, even though it is unaccountable. Sen. Chris Dodd is threatening a filibuster over the telecom issue—Democrats find it difficult to ignore their trial-lawyer constituency. If Congress does not act, fast, intelligence operations will be disrupted. Republicans should keep up the pressure.

■ Spring is the traditional season for fighting in Afghanistan. The Taliban are known to be preparing to mount a big offensive, and ordinary Afghans are getting ready to join whoever looks like winning—which is only prudent of them. Afghan president Hamid Karzai is showing signs of increasing nervousness, and so is defense secretary Robert Gates. The allied force of 42,000 is under NATO auspices, but more than half of them are American. The Canadians and the British are in the thick of the fighting, but Germany, France, Spain, and Italy are among the NATO countries that have put conditions on their soldiers, limiting their operations and making them ineffective. Gates raised the temperature at a NATO meeting by spelling out the risk of defeat and the dire consequences for everyone that would ensue upon Afghanistan's falling to the Taliban. His thinking is clear: Europeans like to stress the part they think they play in global affairs but leave the heavy lifting to the U.S. The surge strategy in Iraq urgently needs repeating in Afghanistan. If the NATO countries cannot provide troops for it, that alliance no longer serves a useful purpose.

■ Dozens were killed on February 1 when twin bombers struck at Baghdad markets. The bombers, both women, died in the blasts, but they were not suicides—both had Down syndrome and were unwitting tools in al-Qaeda's deadly attack. This is a sign of al-Qaeda's power as much as their weakness—

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THE WEEK...

though their numbers dwindle, though they are harried and defeated, they can still adapt to the new order being established in Iraq. Perhaps more indelible than the dozens dead are those two walking bombs who were tricked into al-Qaeda's mission and detonated by remote. This is not the first time innocents have been used for evil—Tiberius had his minnows, armies have their child soldiers—but it is a new chapter in a ghastly old book.

■ Hamas carefully prepared the demolition of the wall demarcating the Gaza Strip from Egypt. Taking everyone by surprise, hundreds of thousands of Gazans swarmed across. Even more surprising, they proved not to be the poverty-stricken folk of politically motivated myth, but bought everything for sale in Egyptian shops—cars, bikes, cattle, provisions—raising local prices and making themselves even more unpopular than they already were. Israeli sources claim that Hamas members also carried in better and heavier military equipment than had previously been at their disposal, and that gangs dispersed into the surrounding Sinai Desert to prepare for attack. Sure enough, two suicide bombers reached the town of Dimona, where the Israeli nuclear plant is. One exploded himself, the other was shot dead before he could detonate. Egyptian police have meanwhile shot and killed another Gazan preparing a terror attack, and their army engineers are in the process of rebuilding the wall of separation. Subsidized by Iran, Hamas believes that taking out Israel is a simple matter of pulling down walls and smuggling weapons. One day, it will get the war it is asking for so recklessly.

■ Iraq's Kurds suffered from some of Saddam's most evil deeds, and Kurdistan, under its somewhat-reconciled rival

The College-Endowment Racket

IN the United States, almost everything is taxed. Sales taxes apply to the things we buy, property taxes apply to the things we own, and income taxes apply to checks we receive. Higher education is one of the few areas exempt from this ubiquitous taxation. The earnings of colleges and universities are, unlike yours and mine, untaxed.

Accordingly, our institutions of higher learning have accumulated enormous riches, as can be seen in the nearby chart. It shows how much money per student 15 institutions can earn on their endowments each year, depending on the rate of return. (These institutions have the largest per capita endowments.) Princeton's annual yield exceeds $100,000 per student. Swarthmore College, my alma mater, has an annual cash flow equal to about $50,000 per student.

A fascinating new study by Richard Vedder, a professor at Ohio University and a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, investigates the public-policy rationale for granting universities tax-free status. His review of the literature suggests that keeping universities tax-free does not equalize opportunities, as advertised.

Vedder cites a recent study by the National Center for Education Statistics that followed the post-high-school progress of mathematically talented students from the high-school class of 1992. The study found that, even among these students, socioeconomic status played a big role in college-graduation rates. By 2000, fully 74 percent of the more affluent students had achieved a bachelor's degree. Only 29 percent of their poorer peers had.

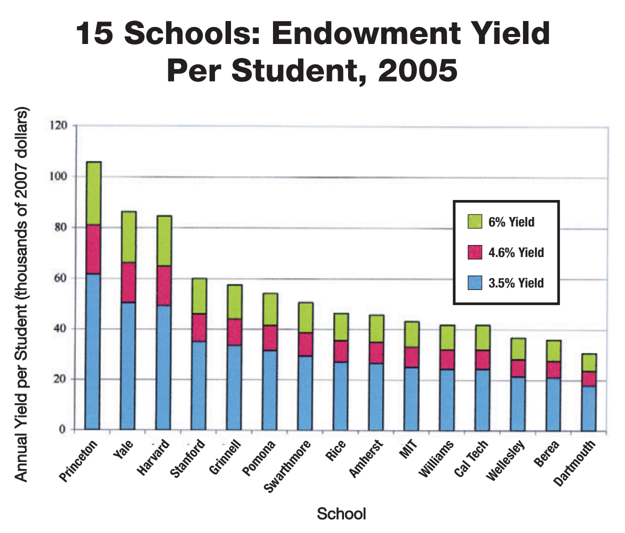
Heavily endowed institutions favor the children of alumni, and have admissions criteria that are often much harder for disadvantaged kids to meet. Moreover, dropout rates are high, with only 60 percent of freshmen typically graduating. Some kids leave college with a degree and a big head start in life. Many have no degree, and painful debts to boot.

The institutions that serve low-income individuals best may well be the for-profit universities, such as the University of Phoenix.

So how should policy respond? Americans currently grant a tax break to universities that primarily serve wealthy kids, and none to many institutions that primarily serve the poor. There has been some talk of taxing universities more. But it would be better to treat the tax status of university endowments as a model for the rest of the economy. Under a consumption tax, the return on capital is not taxed—for anyone.

We should level the playing field by letting everyone else (especially the University of Phoenix and its for-profit brethren) operate under a consumption tax too. Universities have a right to their endowments, but their competitors should also have the right to accumulate capital tax free.

—KEVIN A. HASSETT



15 Schools: Endowment Yield Per Student, 2005

SOURCE: RICHARD VEDDER, "FEDERAL TAX POLICIES REGARDING UNIVERSITIES: ENDOWMENTS AND BEYOND," CENTER FOR COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY AND PRODUCTIVITY

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THE WEEK...

leaders, Masud Barzani and Jalal Talabani, has been freer, more prosperous, and more secure than the rest of Iraq. But Kurdistan has a long way to go yet. The leadership steers economic opportunities and jobs to family members, and sometimes plays footsie with anti-Turkish terrorists. Increasingly Kurds can't even complain about it. Talabani has sued *Hawlati*, one of Kurdistan's last independent newspapers, for exposing corruption and cronyism. Huey al-Long is better than Saddam Hussein, but the thousands of Americans and Kurds who died to overthrow the latter hoped for better still.

JAMAL ARURI/AFP

■ After 9/11, Yasser Arafat was photographed in a hospital apparently giving blood for the victims, and he was made to appear in the world's press as a human being after all. But the scene was rigged, according to a French journalist covering the story. And this was just as well, because Dr. Ashraf al-Kurdi—who looked after the master terrorist's health for 18 years—has been telling a Jordanian news agency that Arafat had AIDS. When he repeated his diagnosis on al-Jazeera television, he was instantly cut off. But what else is new? In Arafat's lifetime it was easy to guess his condition from his appearance. His permanent entourage of young boys, most of them orphans, also spoke for itself. The doctor's accusation that somehow Israel managed to poison him is the usual attempt to pass responsibility for everything on to the Jews. If he really had contributed infected blood to 9/11 survivors, though, it would have been fully in keeping with the rest of his death-dealing.

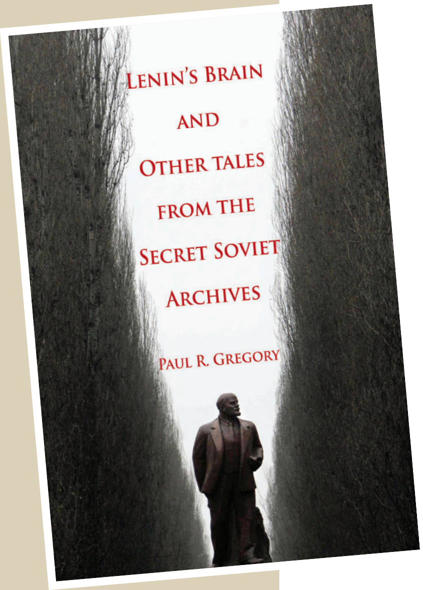
■ The homicidal career of George Habash, who died on January 26, documents that the hateful seed of Arab extremism sometimes takes root in non-Islamic soil. Islamism's apologists always evinced glee in pointing out that Habash, founder of the terrorist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, was of Christian origin. But to call him a "Palestinian Christian," as so many have, is too much: He was an old-fashioned idolator of the state on familiar Leninist lines. Habash will be remembered for masterminding a series of hijackings, the murder of 47 travelers in the bombing of a Swissair flight, and the murder of 27 people at an Israeli airport. He utterly rejected Israel's right to exist and denounced all efforts at reaching a two-state solution. That Mahmoud Abbas ordered three days of mourning for this apostle of murder suggests that the hateful spirit of Habash's life outlives the man.

■ French heads of state seem always to have been plagued by marital issues. Recall King Robert the Pious, whose attempt to marry his cousin Bertha led to the couple's excommunication in A.D. 997, the subject of a striking painting by Jean-Paul Laurens; or the ructions over Philip Augustus's bigamous marriage to Agnes of Merania in 1196, made into a fine opera by Vincenzo Bellini; or the misfortunes of Henri IV and his poor Gabrielle. This dramatic tradition continues. France's current president, Nicolas Sarkozy, shed his second wife, Cécilia, last October, just five months after winning office. He has now wed his third, celebrity-singer-supermodel Carla Bruni, after a three-month affair. Not only is the Sarkozy-Bruni union the proverbial triumph of hope over experience, it is also a triumph of love over politics, Miss Bruni holding conventional celebrity-airhead-leftist opinions while the president is—by French standards, at least—a Thatcherite conservative reformer. Unkind commentators in the French press have expressed skepticism about the marriage's prospects, noting that, in a magazine interview last year, Miss Bruni declared: "I'm monogamous from time to time, but I prefer polygamy and polyandry." There might be the makings of another opera here.

■ For reasons that Al Gore would no doubt be glad to explain to you, the global-warming trend has caused record snowfalls over southern China, exposing the fragility of the infrastructure supporting China's economic miracle. The nation's power stations run on coal, which is mined mostly in the north and west, while power is needed mostly in the bustling south and east. Because the storms shut down rail transport, there were widespread blackouts and factory closures. Food production is also seriously affected, adding to China's already troublesome inflation. Even more disturbing to China's unloved, unelected Communist rulers, vast numbers of people, trying to get home for the Chinese new year, were stranded at railroad stations—*a quarter of a million* just in Canton. (Think what a state the bathrooms must be in.) The nation's leaders have urged their people to "wage war on snow havoc" (*kangji bingxue zaihai*) and made themselves busy trying to put things right, even—good grief!—offering apologies here and there; but a blacked-out, food-short, travel-stressed, inflation-wracked new year can only leave the long-suffering Chinese people further alienated from those who claim, on no consensual basis at all, to represent them.

■ There are many styles of generalship, as any military buff will tell you, but generals who operate *in* the buff are not common. Such a one was Milton Blahyi, leader of some rebel forces in the First Liberian Civil War, of 1989–96. Mr. Blahyi was wont to charge into battle in his birthday suit, to scare the enemy. These tactics earned him the sobriquet General Butt Naked. To further inspirit his troops, this nude Napoleon also used to kill small children and hand out portions of their hearts as pre-battle *hors d'oeuvres*. Then one day, as he was advancing in the altogether, God spoke to him and told him he was doing Satan's work, a thing that had not occurred to the cardiophagic commandant up to that point. The bare-bottomed Belisarius thereupon abandoned his wicked, naked ways and is now an evangelist preacher going by the name Joshua and giving testimony to Liberia's "truth and reconciliation commission." Presumably General B. N. comes within the scope of the scriptural assurance that there shall be joy in heaven over every sinner that repenteth; but in the matter of terrestrial justice, we'd like to hear what the parents of those children have to say about it.

SECRETS FROM THE SOVIET ARCHIVES REVEALED



Lenin's Brain and Other Tales from the Secret Soviet Archives

PAUL R. GREGORY

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Paul R. Gregory, a Hoover Institution research fellow, holds an endowed professorship in the Department of Economics at the University of Houston, Texas, and is a research professor at the German Institute for Economic Research in Berlin.

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THE WEEK . . .

■ Osama bin Laden has several wives; the King of Saudi Arabia and most of the men in his family have too many to count. All such much-endowed men should hurry to Britain, where they will be showered with taxpayers' money. The relevant government department has decided that husbands with multiple wives are entitled to claim welfare benefits for every single one of them, and what's more, the money will be paid directly into *his* account. It helps to be a Muslim, but anyone can claim the benefit so long as the marriage took place abroad. No more bigamy! Long live polygamy! Now there's a fine program to deal with the demographic deficit.

■ In the most hotly contested election since Saddam Hussein narrowly defended his title of Grand Potentate of Greater Mesopotamia with 99.96 percent of the vote, both Fidel Castro and his brother/henchman Raúl were reelected to Cuba's sham parliament, the National Assembly of Popular Power, with 98.4 and 99.4 percent of their constituents' votes, respectively. While some 95 percent of eligible voters went to the polls, Cuba curiously fails to follow the example of Mexico and other Latin American countries in allowing expatriates to vote. We cannot imagine why.

■ From a biologist's point of view, Europeans are rather peculiar. Practically all other human populations are dark-haired, dark-eyed, and quite uniform in skin color. Only in Europe, and especially in eastern and northern Europe, do we find a variety of eye colors, hair colors, and skin tones. This begs for some explanation, and biologists, aided by our fast-growing understanding of the human genome, are inching their way toward one. Most recently, a team at the University of Copenhagen has proved that all the blue-eyed people in the world are descended from a single mutant living several thousand years ago. Why was the mutation "successful," though? Why did it survive and spread? One popular theory credits the odd environment of Paleolithic Europe, where the great ice sheets came unusually far south. That made for tundra topography and fauna, but with high summer sunlight and warm ocean breezes; and *that*, by a plausible chain of logic, led to an abundance of females and intense competition among them for males. As every advertiser knows, an unexpected splash of color makes your product stand out. And as every adult *homo sap.* knows, sexual selection is full of surprises.

■ So *Britneydämmerung* unspools, with a stay in a psychiatric ward. It is hard to know what is worst about this cocktail of professional and personal disintegration. Maybe this: the glee with which the organs of publicity that made a pert, moderately talented girl into a sensation now savor her every sin, stupidity, and misfortune. Turn-of-the-century stardom is never more base than when the boobs turn against those on whom they have lavished money and attention. Even writing about the problem contributes to it. Forget you read this.

■ In her new autobiography, Kathleen Turner says she felt uncomfortable making *Body Heat* because "I was no great beauty." We'll just pause here for a moment while you read the last sentence again. Back? That could be the most clueless statement from a blonde since Hillary's last press conference, but here's the best part: Ms. Turner goes on to say that she has not had sex in two years. And she has company in her solitude, for the hip-hop diva Pepa, of Salt-n-Pepa, says she has been celibate for the same period, and Lenny Kravitz claims to have gone without for even longer. Has Kravitz, with his endless list of bold-face conquests in the gossip columns, become jaded, like a clerk in an expensive candy store? Is he embarrassed that he now must draw from the A-minus list instead of the A list? Alternatively, have he, Pepa, and Turner learned that sex is not so important after all? Or perhaps that it is, so you'd better get it right? Whatever the reason, we hope their newfound emphasis on abstinence will set an example for others who might benefit from it—though we suspect that this product will prove somewhat harder to sell than soft drinks and iPods.

SPRINGBOARD PRESS

■ Students at Choate, the prep school, protested its invitation to Karl Rove to speak at commencement. Rove has graciously agreed to speak there on another occasion. Jillian Ruben, the president of the Choate Young Democrats, explained the controversy: "It wasn't really about that he was a Republican. It was that I feel that he goes against all the things that Choate has spent the last four years teaching me." If Choate has spent the last four years teaching her to be a disingenuous liberal, it has done its job well.

■ An AP/Yahoo poll asked which presidential candidate Americans would most like and least like to have on their bowling team. Hillary Clinton topped both categories, the first one narrowly in a crowded field, the second by a 3-to-1 landslide over Giuliani and Romney. It's understandable that bowlers would want Hillary on their side; she's good at pitching things down the middle, and with her talent for straddling issues she'd be great at converting the 7-10 split. The second result also makes sense: Hillary would surely make herself team captain, and we hear she can be a wee bit bossy. Why bowling, though? Consider this: To bowl successfully, you have to deliver the ball to the right but spin it left (or vice versa); it's numbingly repetitive; they broadcast it endlessly on television, though nobody knows why; and the scoring system is incomprehensible to the uninitiated. All in all, a perfect metaphor for the primary system.

■ Suharto died on January 27, aged 86. His name—like most Javanese, he had just the one—flickered in the background of international news for decades, rarely reaching the front pages, because Indonesia is not a very consequential nation. It is a very big nation, though—the fourth biggest in the world, with more Muslims than any other—and is spread across the strategic space between the Indian and Pacific oceans. Suharto ruled his country as an authoritarian dictator for 31 years, until the Asian financial crisis of 1997–8. He was, as Lyndon Johnson would have said, an SOB, but *our* SOB—a sort of South Asian Chiang

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- **Teens abuse prescription drugs more than any illicit street drug except marijuana.**[4]

What's also disturbing is they don't realize these drugs can be as dangerous as street drugs. So kids who would never try street drugs might feel safe abusing prescription drugs. Misperceptions about prescription drug abuse have serious consequences. In fact, drug treatment admissions for prescription painkillers increased more than 300 percent from 1995 to 2005.[5] Now that you know prescription drug abuse is a problem, here are ways parents can keep it from affecting their kids' lives:

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- **Set clear rules** for teens about all drug use, including not sharing medicine and always following the medical provider's advice and dosages.
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1. 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, SAMHSA, September 2007.
2. Ibid. 3. Ibid. 4. Ibid. 5. 2005 Treatment Episode Data Set, SAMHSA, 2007.

Office of National Drug Control Policy

PARENTS.
THE ANTI-DRUG.

Kai-shek, though much more successful at dealing with his nation's Communists. Like Chiang, he was sensationally corrupt, handing out chunks of the national economy to his relatives. When the end of the Cold War devalued his anti-Communism, he permitted some economic reform, but still left office one of the world's richest men. Suharto was a U.S. ally, if not a fragrant one; he snuffed out Communism and kept Islamic extremism in check; and the occasional massacres for which he held various degrees of responsibility happened in remote places out of sight. It is a pity Indonesia did not do better, but it might have done much worse. R.I.P.

POLITICS

The Comeback . . . Adult

MITT ROMNEY is a smart and talented man who has run a vigorous campaign based mostly on conservative issues. He vows to keep fighting all the way to the convention. But he took third place in several Southern states on Super Tuesday, a dismal showing for someone attempting to rally conservatives. He has our support. But it is now up to him to identify a plausible path to the nomination.

Sen. John McCain's amazing comeback is a testament to the power of perseverance, conviction, and luck. It has been good to see his strength on Iraq rewarded. For the Republican nomination to be worth his having, however, he needs to consolidate his support on the Right—ideally, before the fall.

Doing that will require ignoring some of the spin coming from his allies on immigration. They say that McCain's victories prove that opposition to amnesty is a losing issue. Actually, the anti-amnesty candidates—including Mike Huckabee, who has been running as a deportationist—have gotten majorities in most states. Even in Florida, where strong Hispanic support gave McCain a decisive win, the anti-amnesty candidates got nearly half the vote. McCain's success proves that Republican politicians can survive supporting amnesty if they have compensating strengths. It does not prove that the issue helped him. As Ramesh Ponnuru writes elsewhere in this issue, conservatives cannot reasonably ask McCain to abandon his convictions on immigration. But they can ask him to say that he will defer any action on amnesty, or guest workers, until a few years after enforcement has been put into effect.

Immigration reform is the policy issue that gives conservatives the most concern about McCain. But they worry as much about his priorities as his policies, so he will not be able to win their support merely by listing all of the topics on which he agrees with them. Aside from his opposition to pork-barrel spending, there is no domestic conservative cause that McCain has taken up. We believe that a President McCain would prefer to appoint conservative judges, for example. But would he fight for them or cut a deal with Pat Leahy? That is the fear that underlies the complaints about McCain's membership in the "Gang of 14."

He has not always taken the lead even on national-security issues. Republicans in Washington want to extend and reform an intelligence-collection law, but Democrats are balking, threatening an interruption in operations. McCain's voice would be helpful here, if he chose to use it.

McCain can win over most conservatives, but their support is not his by right. They will rally to him if he demonstrates that he believes that a broad range of conservative policies are among the things that are, to quote the title of one of his books, worth the fighting for.

POLITICS II

Rumbles in the Offing

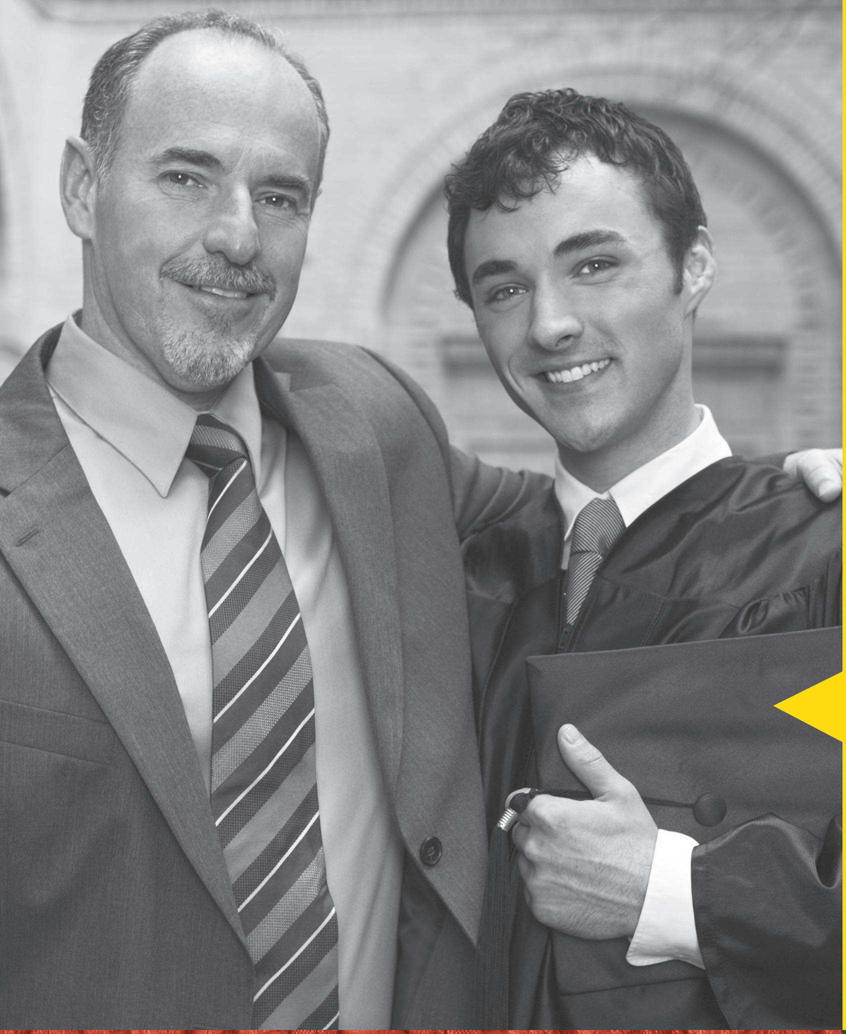
MAYBE it was what Shakespeare called "the fell incensèd points of mighty opposites." Maybe it was what a historian of left-wing movements called "tiny ferocious creatures devouring each other in a drop of water." But the Democrats' Super Tuesday was one more round in what promises to be a long and bitter struggle.

Hillary Clinton won big states that are foundation stones for any Democratic victory—California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York. But Barack Obama won more states, spread all over the map, including inter-party battlegrounds like Minnesota, Missouri, and Colorado. Mrs. Clinton won the older, the poorer, white women, and Hispanics. Obama won the younger, the richer, white men, and blacks. The Democrats' avoidance of winner-take-all rules meant that the two emerged with nearly equal chunks of delegates.

The Democratic race has spiraled into a nightmare for a party of entitlements: a war between the aggrieved. Obama is in the more comfortable position, saying that he appeals to all voters, while his race itself silently appeals to blacks and, even more, to whites who wish to demonstrate their transcendence of racism. Mrs. Clinton's supporters call on her sex more forthrightly; old-line feminist Erica Jong declared that she was for Hillary because mothers and children are "the most oppressed group in our country."

Obama offers himself as the candidate of change. On paper, the promise is almost content-free—a string of sonorous platitudes, like a high school student body president's remarks, or a mainline Protestant sermon. But there is content to Obama-ism after all. Within the Democratic party, he offers a change from the Clintons. The party rallied around them in the Nineties, but it had a lot to put up with: triangulation on policy; the loss of Congress to the GOP; and the long, degrading battle over impeachment. Bill's graduation into elder statesmanship and Hillary's sober work as a senator seemed to put all that behind. But in the stress of battle, the Clintons could not avoid being their essential selves, and many Democrats have coughed them up like a hairball.

More important, Obama promises change from President Bush's eight years, which, thanks to a string of trials and catastrophes—9/11, Afghanistan, Iraq, Katrina—feel like twenty. He offers the appearance of new policies—he would talk to despots, not overthrow them. What he really offers is a



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virginal flight from difficulty. In Obama-time, there will be no wars, because we will choose not to fight them. No hurricanes, either.

Against what James Burnham called the politics of wish, Mrs. Clinton can look tough-minded. A recent science fiction book imagined an aircraft carrier in 2021 named the USS *Hillary Clinton*, after America's "most uncompromising wartime president." But her considerable determination extends primarily to personal survival. Intellectually and politically she is wavering, and has risen as far as she has largely on the back of her husband. Ambition is no substitute for strategy.

Conservatives must look up from their own struggles to Obama and Clinton, since one of them will be favored to win in November.

THE ECONOMY

Growth Is Not Enough

We harbor doubts about whether the economy is going into a recession, and about the "stimulus" bill that the president and House leaders of both parties devised to soften or shorten it if we are. Still, we favor its swift passage. The bill includes some worthwhile corporate tax cuts and some harmless income-tax rebates. If senators hold it up, it will be to add worse policies to the mix—notably, expanded unemployment benefits, which have been shown to expand unemployment. Congress should instead enact the president's proposal now.

And then what? Most Republicans are responding to slow growth by returning to familiar ground. They advocate cutting taxes on work, saving, and investment to revive growth. But the old playbook will not work in today's circumstances. We have had robust growth for much of the Bush administration, and people have not felt that the country is doing well. One reason for their unease is that wages for middle-income workers have stagnated. Employers are paying higher health-care premiums instead of handing out raises. Yet Republicans talk about the economy and health care as though they were separate issues.

In many parts of the country, the price of housing, energy, and child care, combined with the burden of the payroll tax, has made it hard for young people to start families. Republicans ought to keep those families in mind when they offer tax relief.

Republicans cannot win national elections without winning the tax issue. But they cannot do that unless they apply conservative principles to the challenges of the moment—which include reviving middle-class prosperity as well as growth.

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Living with McCain

The choices we face

RAMESH PONNURU

JOHN MCCAIN has never voted to raise income taxes, and he told me last year that he could see no circumstances under which he would ever assent to a tax increase. Instead he wants to cut taxes. He calls himself the strongest free trader in the Senate since Phil Gramm, his campaign co-chairman, left that body. He has a longer track record of consistent opposition to abortion than any of his primary opponents. He promises to veto bills with pork-barrel spending, he voted against expanding Medicare, and he wants personal accounts for Social Security. He has consistently voted to keep those guns that critics call "assault weapons" legal. He has voted to confirm all the conservative justices on the Supreme Court and promises to nominate like-minded colleagues for them.

Should conservatives consider McCain to be one of their number, or be upset about his nomination? The answers to these two questions, heavily debated in recent weeks, depend on how high conservatives set the bar for politicians. If our criterion is that they must reason from conservative first principles to policy conclusions, then McCain is not a conservative. If our criterion is that they must agree with most self-described conservatives on nearly every important issue, then McCain is, again, not a conservative. Using those definitions, Reagan is the only conservative president we have had in modern times. That judgment is defensible. But it should put into perspective the notion that, in McCain, a calamity has just befallen conservatives.

Some conservatives are despairing (and some liberals gloating) at the thought that they are losing their grip on the Republican party. What grip? Conservatives have had serious misgivings about every Republican nominee since 1984. Bush's father wasn't conservatives' first choice in 1988, nor was Bob Dole in 1996. Dole's record on economics, by the way, was well to McCain's left. McCain has voted against tax cuts, but Dole had actually voted for tax increases. Conservatives spent much of 1999 and 2000 debating whether the adjective would swallow the noun in George W. Bush's "compassionate conservatism."

In a McCain-bashing session on Fox News, two days after the Florida primary, Ann Coulter and Sean Hannity ran through their disagreements with the senator: on torture, tax cuts, campaign-finance regulation, drilling for oil in Alaska, and immigration. "These are not small issues to conservatives," Hannity concluded. Most of them should be.

McCain probably overestimates the environmental damage that would attend drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. But at best such drilling would increase world oil production by a little more than 1 percent. It's not a do-or-die issue, and conservatives shouldn't waste time trying to get McCain to come their way on the question. We have more important things to discuss with him. Torture? McCain's biggest difference with most conservatives has concerned waterboarding, a technique that the United States does not use today and does not contemplate using. Tax cuts? It would be nice if McCain admitted that he was wrong to vote against the tax cuts of 2001 and 2003. It's more important that he wants to keep those tax cuts now, and cut some additional taxes.

Conservatives rightly object to the campaign-finance regulations McCain championed. But those regulations are neither going away nor getting more stringent. Senator McCain seeks no additional legislation on the subject and would not require that his judicial nominees consider those regulations constitutional. As much as conservatives dislike McCain's record, his position in the current debate shouldn't be a deal-breaker.

That leaves three big issues that have continuing relevance and set most conservatives against McCain: immigration (which Hannity mentioned), stem cells, and global warming. McCain, like President Bush, supports "comprehensive immigration reform": increased enforcement, a guest-worker program, and legalization for most illegal immi-

ROMAN GENN

grants. Critics rightly call that last bit "amnesty."

Conservatives cannot reasonably expect McCain to recant his view, nor can he expect conservatives to agree with it. McCain has already said, however, that he understands that enforcement has to come first, because voters will not allow an amnesty until they can trust that the laws will be enforced in the future. That recognition could serve as the basis for a compromise, but McCain ought to go a step farther.

His proposed version of "enforcement first" would require border-state governors to certify that the border has been secured, at which point illegal immigrants would start getting legalized and guest workers would start coming in. This proposal is flawed. The certification could be gamed. Since 40 percent of current illegal immigrants came here legally and overstayed their visas, a secure border could coincide with a rising illegal population. If McCain insisted on this approach, I would back his election anyway and hope that his legislation was defeated in Congress. Critics of comprehensive reform managed to overcome presidential opposition in the last two Congresses; maybe we can do it again.

McCain ought to make it clear that he welcomes rather than disdains conservative support.

Still, McCain would be better advised to modify his approach. What if he promised to step up enforcement, make sure that the illegal population is shrinking, and only then move separate legislation on amnesty and guest workers? That sequence would be consistent with what he has said. He would continue to support a path to citizenship, rather than mass deportation, for most illegal immigrants, so Hispanics who like his position on immigration would have no reason to feel betrayed. He would also continue to support "enforcement first," and when the time came to debate an amnesty and a guest-worker program, we would know whether the government was now serious about enforcing the law. No certification would be necessary. Under this plan, large numbers of voters would not feel that enforcement was being held hostage to make them accept an amnesty. McCain still would not win over all the conservatives who are upset with him over immigration, but he would minimize the problem.

While generally in agreement with pro-lifers, McCain has broken with them on stem-cell research. He favors federal funding for research that involves destroying human embryos at fertility clinics, on the ground that those embryos would otherwise be thrown away or indefinitely frozen. He has acknowledged that recent scientific advances make it more likely that stem-cell research can proceed without any destruction of embryos. If those advances continue, McCain could come back to the pro-life fold. If they do not materialize, pro-lifers are unlikely to prevail in this fight no matter who is in the White House.

On global warming, my sense is that McCain is more passionate about the need to protect ourselves from its risks than he is committed to his legislation on the subject. If so, there is room for a rapprochement on this issue, too. Conservatives would have to acknowledge that global warming is real—and then look for solutions that would damage the economy less than the emissions cap that McCain currently favors.

McCain can take a few other steps that would reduce conservative opposition to him. He should name the conservative legal heavyweights he would consult when filling judicial vacancies. An unquestionably conservative vice-presidential pick would help too. So would an announcement that McCain intends to serve one term devoted to a few compelling causes, such as winning the War on Terror and reforming the government. The general public would enjoy a break from self-serving politicians and eight-year presidencies, and conservatives would appreciate that McCain is more interested in leading his country than remaking his party.

McCain should also signal that he does not intend to rewrite the party platform to reflect his views on all issues. The platform calls for amending the Constitution to block same-sex marriage. McCain disagrees. If he picks a fight on this question, it will divide his party—and he might lose.

Above all, McCain ought to make it clear that he welcomes rather than disdains conservative support. Some conservatives dislike him intensely, but many more fear that he dislikes us—and that he makes no distinctions among the people to his right. Addressing these concerns will be a matter of tone as much as content.

If McCain is going to be the nominee, it is in conservatives' interest that he win the election and then govern as conservatively as possible. We will not be able to tug him rightward in any way that endangers his appeal to moderates or his reputation for "straight talk"—especially since conservative opposition didn't cost him the nomination. But to win the general election, McCain needs more conservative support than he now has, and he needs to consolidate that support early, so that he can spend the fall on the more difficult task of appealing to independent voters.

McCain faces a very difficult challenge on the economy. He does not appear to have spent much time thinking about economics, and it showed in the last debate, when he talked about how greedy people need to be punished. The problem with this type of rhetoric is not so much that it is leftist as that it is infantile. Neither McCain nor any other presidential candidate has a plan to reduce or punish greed. Indeed, McCain wants to cut corporate tax rates.

The economic topic the senator is most comfortable discussing is the need to cut wasteful spending. Conservatives like that message, but it is not one that will win over the general public in a time of slow growth, stagnant wages, and financial insecurity. McCain has some top-shelf conservative economic advisers, including Phil Gramm, Jack Kemp, and Steve Forbes. They will doubtless help him articulate a pro-growth politics. But in recent years our middle class has been anxious even when growth has been high, and it will take some creativity for the senator to address its concerns.

I'm a conservative admirer of Senator McCain, but don't get me wrong: The election, and a possible McCain presidency, will be a rough ride for conservatives (as the last eight years have also been). It will go smoother if the senator and his conservative critics can be persuaded to act on their interests instead of their resentments. **NR**

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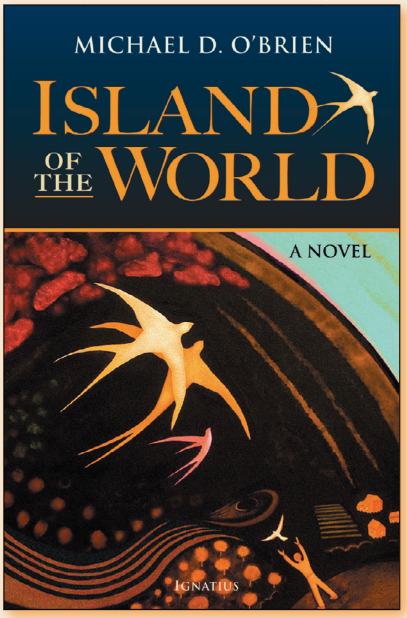
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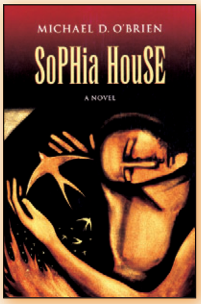
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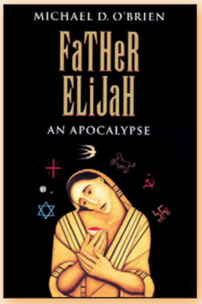
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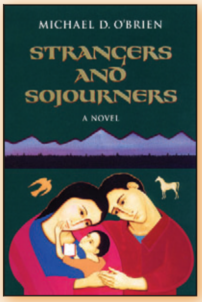
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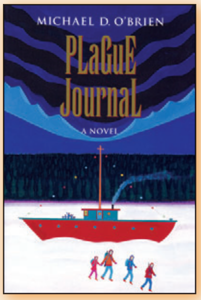
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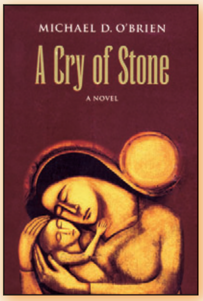
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■ 2008 II

Honor Politics

McCain's is a peculiar conservatism

YUVAL LEVIN

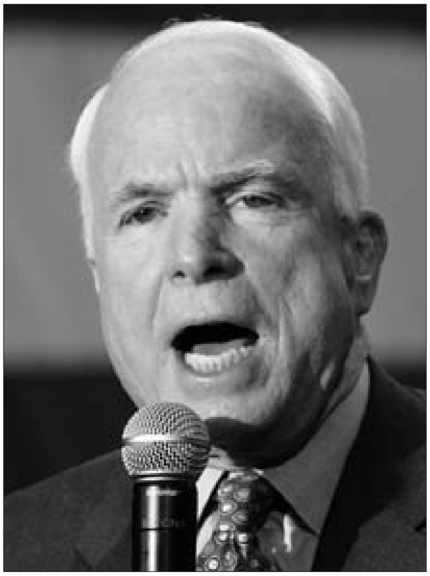
JOHN MCCAIN seems strangely uneasy at the top. Throughout the Republican primary campaign, he has shown himself an able scrappy underdog, and once the voting started he proved he can be a very good come-from-behind winner too. But McCain has never seemed able to make sense of himself as the acknowledged leader of the pack. At campaign events and election-night rallies, his supporters always chant "Mac is back." But McCain's challenge now is not a comeback. He needs to solidify his strong position and broaden his base of support. That would seem to require a kind of politicking McCain is very evidently uncomfortable with, and that he has not been very good at in the past.

For most Republican politicians, building bridges to the base would mean meetings and press conferences with prominent social and fiscal conservatives, speeches articulating commonly held principles and policy goals, and in general wrapping themselves in the various banners of conservatism. McCain will certainly do some of this, and has already tried, but it is not his style, and is frankly unlikely to help him much.

He has, of course, famously traveled to the late Jerry Falwell's Liberty University, and sought to line up party luminaries. And in some versions of his stump speech he does seek to offer a narrative of his conservatism. He gave it a shot in his victory speech in Florida—laying out some commonly held conservative ideals and attitudes, focused especially on limited government—but conservatives had better hope that was not his best shot.

Indeed, McCain seems ill-suited to articulate and champion a positive ideology, as conservatives generally understand the term. He is obviously devoted to his country and deeply committed to an ideal of honor, and he can be quite effective at expressing both of these profound passions. But, beyond them, he does not really seem to have a vision of what politics should aim to achieve, only of what he is angry about and wants to oppose; and most of the things that anger him do so as violations of honor, not of political principle or ideology.

That is where the misguided passion for campaign-finance reform comes from. It is why, when he moves from the generality of opposing earmarks to a specific example of egregious federal spending, just about the only one he calls up is a corrupt Pentagon deal with Boeing. I have the strong impression (first developed in a lengthy meeting on the subject with McCain himself) that his support for embryo-destructive stem-cell research—breaking with an otherwise spotless pro-life record—is driven by a personal commitment to Nancy Reagan, and nothing else; a matter of honor. He often explains his roots in conservatism in similar terms: as having first developed out of a personal loyalty to Ronald Reagan, who stood by him and his fellow POWs and worked to make sure America did not forget them. McCain does not seem to care about political "issues" the way most political people do.



The prickly Republican

MONIKA GRAFF/UPI

This is obviously a serious problem for a Republican candidate for the presidency, and it has created powerful tensions between McCain and many conservatives. Conservatism is a movement of ideas, grounded in premises and theories that tend to be fairly close to the surface, and that directly inform the day-to-day political judgments conservatives make. McCain's dispositional disregard for ideas in politics is therefore taken (and often justifiably) as not only a snub but a very bad sign. He is seen to be an unreliable conservative, and one who takes up very strange causes and struggles that are often at odds with the agenda of the Right. And his protestations to the contrary—pointing to his voting record and his public commitments—do not satisfy conservatives because they do nothing to explain his prominent excursions into heterodoxy.

McCain has made the most of his unusual approach to politics throughout his career, developing his own special brand of honor politics, which in practice is often a form of anger politics. It makes him terribly prickly and self-righteous, but also determined and often successful. The substance of his crusades has turned off a lot of conservatives, and rightly so, but the tone can be quite effective. And when it is directed to a cause conservatives share—most notably the war—the Right can take real pleasure in his passion.

More important, it's all McCain has got, and he needs to make the most of it, and not try to pretend he's something he's not. To both his credit and his detriment, McCain just *can't* pretend. Rather than attempt a feeble imitation of Ronald Reagan (the ubiquitous mistake of this campaign) and try to paint the grand conservative vision of things, McCain needs to train himself at least to oppose the things conservatives oppose—paternalism that corrupts the roots of personal initiative and self-reliance, a callous disregard for the lives of the innocent unborn, hostility to our cultural traditions, cosmopolitanism that sees nothing special in America—and so to channel his anger in politically (not to mention substantively) healthy directions. That can be his way of building bridges, and it can also be an effective way of organizing his campaign's themes going forward.

Such an approach would likely depend on Senator Clinton's winning her party's nomination. McCain could work himself into a campaign to defend America from Hillary Clinton and the kinds of corrup-

Mr. Levin is a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and senior editor of *The New Atlantis* magazine.

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tions (ideological and personal) of American politics and American life the Clintons stand for. It would be harder, though not impossible, to carry off against Obama. It would also require McCain to direct his aggressive hostility at Democrats, not just Republicans, and he has never shown great aptitude for this. But he is surely capable of it, and in any case it will be easier for him to do than almost any other available means of reconciling with conservatives and pulling off a Republican campaign for president.

Conservatives fear John McCain because they assume he approaches politics the way most people do, and so take his substantive views to express an underlying liberalism. That is certainly mistaken. McCain is neither a liberal nor quite a conservative. Even if his actions do not always live up to his own standards, McCain is an honor politician—aggressive in opposing corruption, hypersensitive to inauthenticity or dishonesty, addicted to big causes, essentially uninterested in what most conservatives take to be the substance of politics, and, lest we forget, supremely vain. This is not a wonderful combination, but it is not a terrible one, and it could well be a winning one in November. Conservatives should view McCain not as a hostile force, but as a foreign and unfamiliar presence, bearing real potential as well as real risk.

To make the most of McCain's potential—his appeal to voters, his personality and force of character, his immensely impressive personal history, his patriotism and devotion to America—conservatives should seek ways to make their causes his, and so to focus on the elements of honor and of greatness in the defense of the American family and the country's freedom and prosperity. They should emphasize the elements of their worldview that speak to honor, just as McCain should emphasize the elements of his that speak to freedom, family, and limited government.

Conservatives should also use this period of the campaign to extract very specific commitments and promises on the substantive issues that move them, but seem to mean so little to him. A man of honor does not break a promise, and this is the time to invest McCain's honor in the Right's crucial aims.

To make the most of this moment himself, McCain should make those promises, and plan to keep them. **NR**

■ 2008 III

Let's Face The Music

There is an Obama in the GOP's future

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

It is a truth universally acknowledged that Hillary Clinton would be the ideal Democratic candidate for the GOP. Almost all the pundits, including most of National Review's writers, share this view. The polls suggest that the surviving Republican hopefuls would do better against her than against Barack Obama—and, still more remarkable, that John McCain would actually defeat her. Her initial aura of inevitability has been replaced after the unexpectedly bruising primary battles by one of outright vulnerability. She is seen as a hard-edged, "divisive" figure who would alienate voters simply by being herself.

Conservatives are tempted to believe all these things because they themselves would enjoy fighting Hillary. She would unify conservatives against herself and attract fewer independents than Obama.

But these factors are perhaps outweighed by one other—namely, that almost any Republican is at a disadvantage against almost any Democrat this year. The polls matching McCain against Hillary or Obama against Mitt Romney don't all show this at present. But polls showing the issues that Americans consider most important, or which party they most trust to deal with them, or even simply whether people self-identify as Democrats or Republicans—all these favor the Democrats, sometimes heavily. Democrats are also raising more money than the GOP, and their primaries and caucuses have brought out more supporters. Republican congressmen confirm this hostile trend when they announce they are stepping down this year. All the usual signals point to a Democratic victory.

These disadvantages might be overcome if the GOP were led by a political "natural" like Reagan. Unfortunately, none of the surviving GOP candidates fall into that category. So, even if we grant that Hillary would be easier to beat than Obama, both are so heavily favored to win that this distinction between them hardly matters. What does matter, therefore—and very seriously—is whether there is an important distinction between them in how they would govern. Some conservatives set aside their distaste for Mrs. Clinton at this point and discover unsuspected virtues in her. She is tough, competent, experienced, and centrist (in recent years, at least). Maybe she would not want the historical responsibility of losing a war and would therefore continue the fight in Iraq? Or perhaps she would compromise with the GOP on health care in order to avoid the humiliation of a second failed national plan?

Such things are, indeed, possible. Hillary is a practical politician who is prepared to compromise. But she is also a principled liberal Democrat, so her compromises always move the status quo a little farther toward statism.

Obama is harder to estimate. He is running as a national unifier, but his record is unashamedly left-wing. Conservatives tend to discount his rhetoric while minutely examining his voting record. Usually that is sensible, but on this occasion it may mislead. To begin with, the mere fact of an Obama presidency would change America and the world's view of America—just as the mere fact of a Polish Pope undermined Soviet rule in Eastern Europe. It would demonstrate that the promise of America—of opportunity for everyone—is real and being progressively realized. It would undermine anti-Americanism abroad and the querulous politics of racial grievance at home. It would give Americans a better opinion of themselves, rather as Reagan did, and perhaps launch U.S. politics on a new trajectory.

But what sort of trajectory? Obama's campaign has stressed the idea of transcending race and ethnicity so that Americans see one another as Americans rather than engage in racial pigeonholing. It is magnificent rhetoric, but it has hardly influenced Obama's policies. He has generally stuck to his party's (hard) line on racial preferences, immigration, and other issues tinged with race. At the same time, as both Mickey

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Kaus and Terry Eastland have noticed, Obama has occasionally thrown out remarks suggesting that he is unhappy with this—and with the racial essentialism underlying such policies. He told George Stephanopoulos last May that preferences should also "take into account white kids who have been disadvantaged." Again, however, he has yet to develop this argument further.

In his fine new study of Obama, *A Bound Man*, Shelby Steele traces this ambivalence to a conflict within Obama's soul created by his upbringing. To oversimplify a very subtle argument, Obama in the absence of his father sought to found a sense of belonging in his racial identity. But racial identity afforded him nothing but psychological comfort. Obama knew—and in his own autobiographical writings, he fondly acknowledged—that his success in life was due to the habits of diligence and self-reliance instilled in him by his mother and his (white) grandparents. And these were human virtues, not racial ones. Should he today urge young black people to stress their blackness, as establishment America and the Democratic party both do, or to develop the responsible virtues that have helped him to rise?

How Obama answers that question should—in logic at least—determine how he shapes policies. But his answer might well be influenced by how the election influences *him*. If Obama is elected president—especially if it's a landslide—he will undoubtedly owe this to the votes of crossover Republicans and independents as well as Democrats. It is not impossible that he will be the first Democrat since LBJ to win a majority of the white vote. And he will enjoy more goodwill on Inauguration Day than anyone since Ike in 1953.

Political calculation alone would mandate that he govern in such a way as to keep the good opinion of these voters. But he would also realize that they had placed their trust in him in an unusually serious way. They would be looking to him to govern in the spirit of a colorblind national unity and to encourage the "vigorous virtues" in all groups. It would be a very coldhearted statesman who could resist the power of such hopes.

One final consideration: The 2008 campaign could be Hillary's last hurrah. There would be no second chance for an inevitable candidate who had lost.

By contrast, Obama has a series of attractive prospects ahead of him. Let's look at some of them.

One. He defeats Hillary and wins the presidency.

Two. He defeats Hillary but loses narrowly in November—and runs again in 2012. Unlike Hillary, Obama would likely be given a second chance. He would be a more seasoned campaigner and a more "experienced" politician.

Three. Hillary wins the presidency, but chooses not to run in 2012. Obama would be the almost automatic Democratic nominee. But why would Hillary not be running for a second term? Only if she seemed to be facing inevitable defeat. Those are not the ideal circumstances for a candidate of the same party, but Obama would be sufficiently detached from the Clinton regime to vault over that hurdle.

Four. Even if Hillary were to serve two full terms, Obama would start out as the favorite for 2016.

Five. This scenario is the one sketched out by those Republicans who want Hillary to be the GOP's opponent. Obama loses the nomination to Hillary after a fiercely contested convention and she goes on to lose the general election. But if this happened, Obama would then be the man who could have won the 2008 election if his party had let him; he would be a Democratic version of Reagan in 1976. He would also benefit from the longevity of Republican rule, and his own seasoning as a politician and candidate. He would almost certainly win the November 2012 election—probably by a landslide—and his coattails might sweep other Democrats into the House and Senate.

Only one scenario meets Republican wishes to any great extent—Obama fights and loses the two elections of 2008 and 2012. But just how likely is that?

Of course, none of the above might happen. A massive slump in the first Hillary Clinton administration might keep all Democrats out of power for a generation. But as Damon Runyon pointed out, though the race is not always to the swift, that's the way to bet. Obama looks like he'll be in the GOP's future one way or another. Maybe we should decide to get him over with—and the sooner the better. **NR**

■ 2008 IV

The Mayor's Unmaking

Why Rudy Giuliani's presidential bid fell apart

BYRON YORK

VOTERS, especially Republican voters, like executives when it comes to picking presidents. So why did they reject the man who is widely recognized as perhaps the best government executive of his generation? That's the question of Rudy Giuliani's failed presidential candidacy—one that took him from national frontrunner to dropout after his first big primary.

In the beginning, Giuliani's task seemed impossible. Pro-choice, pro–gun control, and pro–gay civil unions, he was clearly a hard sell in Republican primaries where social conservatives play a prominent role. But Giuliani managed to project an image of strength on national-security issues, and he came up with a tax-cutting-and-economic-growth plan that impressed economic conservatives. He also made some measure of peace with social conservatives; after an initial period of indecision on how to present his positions, he wisely chose to just be himself, avoiding the flip-flopper label that would dog Mitt Romney.

It seemed to work. According to the RealClearPolitics average, Giuliani led in national polls for nearly all of 2007. The same average showed him second in Iowa as late as the beginning of October. He was second in New Hampshire in early December. He was leading in Michigan as late as mid-December. And he was tied for the lead in South Carolina at the same time. Giuliani had seemingly overcome his own policy weaknesses. But all those leads were gone by the beginning of January. Why?

Certainly the social issues, as voters finally made up their minds, came back to bite Giuliani; it's just hard to win Republican primaries with those positions. But Giuliani's defeat was due to a number of other factors as well.

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First on the list is a deeply flawed strategy. Long before the primaries, Giuliani outlined a plan in which he would focus on the big states that followed early votes in Iowa, New Hampshire, Michigan, and South Carolina. Beginning with Florida, and moving into the Super Tuesday primaries, Giuliani would win big in the biggest arenas.

Giuliani made a plausible argument for his plan. But what we didn't see was that the strategy was based not on some new understanding of the dynamics of the race but rather on his own weaknesses. Giuliani was deeply worried about losing all of the early states, so rather than compete he pulled out. But doing that made him look like a loser, and when the time came to compete in his chosen arena, Florida, he actually became one.

A few days after Giuliani pulled out of the race, I talked through the strategy with Mike DuHaime, his campaign manager. We discussed the early states and Giuliani's decision to skip, or downplay his effort in, each of them.

First, Iowa. "It was just understanding the nature of the electorate," DuHaime told me. "Six in ten were evangelicals. We had done our polling and noticed from pretty early on that it was unlikely we would have a victory there." So Giuliani decided to make minimal effort in the first contest of the year.

Certainly candidates have skipped Iowa and gone on to do well in other races. But what about New Hampshire? "In any other presidential year, New Hampshire might have been tailor-made for Rudy," DuHaime says. "But this year, when you had a neighboring governor from Massachusetts who was outspending everybody, and you had John McCain, who has an amazing personal connection to the state—we found that voters really liked Rudy, but they were picking McCain or Romney." After at first trying to compete—in November, Giuliani went in with a couple million dollars in advertising and extensive personal campaigning—Giuliani pulled out.

Then there was Michigan. "It's kind of New Hampshire lite," DuHaime told me. "It was a place where Mitt Romney had close connections and John McCain won in 2000." It was also a pretty expensive media market and came just a week after New Hampshire. "Knowing that it would come right on the heels of New Hampshire, knowing that someone would come into Michigan with strong momentum, we decided to pick our spots." So Giuliani skipped Michigan.

Near trail's end in Florida

Finally, South Carolina. "Early on, if you were to pick the states that were most difficult to win, they would have been Iowa and South Carolina, because of the nature of the electorate there," DuHaime told me. "By that point, the decision had been made to go to Florida."

So there it was. Deciding that none of the first four contests was just right, Giuliani headed to Florida.

At first, things looked good. "The crowds were crazy," one campaign staffer told me. "He was on the front page of all the newspapers, doing the bus tour across the state. Got off the plane, there'd be 500 people there."

But the papers also showed John McCain giving a victory speech in New Hampshire, and Mitt Romney giving a victory speech in Michigan, and McCain giving another victory speech in South Carolina. They were the winners, the guys with momentum. Giuliani was in Florida, campaigning hard, but he didn't have any success to cite. And once the other states began to dominate the news, Giuliani became less and less visible.

In retrospect, it's hard to escape the conclusion that Giuliani wrongly counted himself out in some places. "I think he would have played very well here, I really do," Katon Dawson, who heads the South Carolina Republican party, told me after Giuliani withdrew. "The first time I encountered him, we had 400 people in a state executive-committee meeting, and you can't get more conservative than that in South Carolina. I watched him answer questions, and the heads nodded. Gun control, pro-life—he answered that question flawless, and people gravitated to him because of the leadership." Dawson doesn't say Giuliani would have won, but he does believe Giuliani could have come in second.

There were other factors that contributed to Giuliani's failure. Certainly the attention paid to the indictment of Bernard Kerik, the Giuliani insider whom the mayor had made New York police commissioner (and had once suggested for a cabinet job), didn't help. In addition, toward the end of November, Giuliani was the target of a number of press exposés touching on his private life. On

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November 28, the Politico, an online publication, charged that Giuliani "billed obscure city agencies for tens of thousands of dollars in security expenses amassed during the time when he was beginning an extramarital relationship with future wife Judith Nathan." The suggestion was that Giuliani moved the money around to hide his affair, and the story attracted tremendous attention and threw Giuliani on the defensive.

Later, the *New York Times* looked in and found little to support the Politico's charges. But the damage was done. And other reports, like stories that Giuliani had provided city security to Nathan while they were having an affair, were accurate, and took their toll.

And then there was the question of Giuliani himself. There's a theory, especially popular in the press, that people just don't like Giuliani, and that the more they see of him the less they like him. When I appeared on *Meet the Press* recently and attributed Giuliani's failure mainly to a bad campaign plan, I got a note from a reporter friend. "I'm increasingly convinced it was NOT the Giuliani strategy," he wrote. "It was the candidate. He spent a lot of money and time in New Hampshire; polls show he dropped there. I just don't think he wears well: People inspected him and said no. I was always skeptical that he would sell outside of New York City. It's not only abortion/gays/guns; it's just who he is."

As one might expect, Giuliani's people vigorously reject that line of thinking. The truth is pretty much unknowable; certainly Giuliani worked hard to smooth down some of the rough edges he displayed as mayor, but he still might have turned off people unfamiliar with New York politics.

In any event, Giuliani is gone, and with him, a candidacy that should have been more than it was. On the stump, Giuliani often told audiences that George Will called his time as mayor of New York "the most successful episode of conservative governance in this country in the last 50 years." Even if you want to quibble with that, there's no doubt that Giuliani had a very, very impressive record to present to voters. But how you do it matters, and in the end we learned that Giuliani could run New York City like nobody's business, but couldn't do the same for his own campaign. **NR**

■ **THE LAW**

Killer Comfort

Two death-row inmates force a moratorium on capital punishment

JOHN J. MILLER

About 7 o'clock on the morning of April 9, 1990, Tina Earley was dropping off her husband, Edward, at a dry-cleaning business they owned in Lexington, Ky., when a car driven by Thomas Clyde Bowling slammed into her vehicle. For reasons that remain unclear, Bowling jumped out of his car and shot the Earleys—killing them both and wounding their two-year-old son. Then he drove away. Within a couple of days, the police arrested Bowling for the crime.

About two years later, not far from the scene of the Earley murders, sheriff Steve Bennett and deputy sheriff Arthur Briscoe approached the cabin of Ralph Baze to arrest him on multiple warrants. Baze chose to resist. He fired three shots into the back of Bennett, killing him. Briscoe tried to get away, but he failed—Baze shot him twice, again in the back. Briscoe still wasn't dead, so Baze put a fatal bullet into his brain.

Juries placed both Bowling and Baze on death row. But a series of legal maneuvers has kept Kentucky from carrying out their sentences. Most recently, they have claimed a constitutional right to "an anesthetized death" that is "essentially painless"—something they say Kentucky can't provide because it executes via lethal injection, as does nearly every state that employs the death penalty.

Their case is currently before the Supreme Court, with a ruling expected by June. There hasn't been a single execution in the United States since a few days after the justices' September decision to take up the case—judges at all levels, including the Supreme Court itself, have issued stays of execution whenever death-row inmates have requested them. The result is the first nationwide halt to capital punishment since the 1970s. This moratorium could continue indefinitely if the court decides that murderers shouldn't have to confront the remote possibility that they will suffer briefly as they die.

The case, *Baze* v. *Rees*, boils down to an interpretation of the Eighth Amendment—and specifically the meaning of its ban on "cruel and unusual punishments." When the Founders wrote these words into the Constitution, their intent was to forbid the most gruesome measures: beheading, mutilation, drawing and quartering, burning at the stake, and so on. Over time, the words of the Eighth Amendment have been taken as a restriction on torture and lingering death.

For a century, execution meant hanging—a form of capital punishment that often involves a near-instant death if the spinal cord is broken, or a minute or two of strangulation before unconsciousness arrives. Toward the end of the 19th century, the noose gave way first to the electric chair and then to the gas chamber, in the belief that they were more humane. Today, however, no state relies on hanging or the gas chamber exclusively, and only Nebraska uses the electric chair. (A handful of states allow the condemned to choose these methods; the last hanging occurred in Delaware in 1996.)

Just as the gas chamber replaced the gallows, older methods of execution have been supplanted by lethal injection, once again because it is regarded as more humane—swifter, less painful, and more certain. As a form of execution, it's a throwback to old-fashioned poisoning, but it's a far cry from Socrates and his hemlock. Lethal injection uses a three-drug cocktail that anesthetizes, relaxes, and finally kills. Bowling and Baze can't claim that lethal injection is unusual, because 36 states employ it. But they would like the Supreme Court to find that it is cruel.

The justices have a history of restricting the death penalty. In 1972, they essentially banned capital punishment because of what they regarded as its arbitrary application. (In the aftermath, Arkansas used its electric chair in a prison barber shop, according to *The Death Penalty: An American History,* by Stuart Banner.) Over the next four years, however, many states passed sentencing guidelines—and the Supreme Court allowed capital punish-

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ment once more. The court also has imposed limits: No one faces the executioner for rape, kidnapping, or crimes committed as minors, and the mentally retarded are exempt no matter what they have done.

Bowling and Baze would like the court to create a new prohibition on the grounds that lethal injection as currently practiced may not always kill with perfect painlessness. Their assertion highlights the controversial phenomenon of "anesthesia awareness," a condition in which patients are supposedly anesthetized for a procedure but in fact can feel pain and aren't able to communicate their distress to doctors. In the case of a three-drug lethal injection, it would mean that the first drug (an anesthetic called sodium thiopental) fails to work but the second (pancuronium bromide, a muscle relaxant) does its job and paralyzes the condemned as the third (potassium chloride) performs its grim function.

There is essentially no argument against lethal injection when it functions properly. During oral arguments on January 7, Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Anthony Kennedy got the plaintiffs' lawyer, Donald B. Verrilli Jr., to admit as much. "If there were a way to guarantee that the procedure worked every time, then we wouldn't have substantial risk," he said. Yet death-penalty foes have claimed that lethal injections are often botched and that when they're botched they're cruel. The American Civil Liberties Union backs Bowling and Baze. It has filed a brief on their behalf, writing that current forms of lethal injection are "inconsistent with contemporary values and civilized standards of decency."

The advocates of capital punishment have shown little sympathy for this line of argument. "It's a last-ditch effort," says Josh Marquis, the Democratic district attorney of Oregon's Clatsop County. "To believe that a person who has committed the absolute worst crime should not suffer momentary discomfort is absurd." Bill Otis, a former assistant U.S. attorney who supports capital punishment, has likened the legal strategy to the one pro-lifers adopted in their attempts to outlaw partial-birth abortion: "The opponents know that they can't sell wholesale abolition to the country, so they're trying to focus on a particular procedure in order to gain a little ground." Capital punishment registers more public support than just about any other policy that is routinely deemed divisive. In a Gallup poll last October, 69 percent of respondents said that they favored the death penalty for people convicted of murder.

The debate over lethal injection seeks to shift the conversation away from the crimes of the condemned—nobody's fretting over the pain of Sheriff Briscoe—and endeavors to transform killers into victims, strapped into gurneys and awaiting pain. "We have to remember that the ultimate purpose of this procedure is to punish them for the exceptionally brutal crimes that they chose to commit," says Kent Scheidegger of the Sacramento, Calif.–based Criminal Justice Legal Foundation.

One potential but flawed solution would be to require the presence of doctors at executions. They might ensure that the anesthetics are working as intended before the administration of further drugs, for instance. The problem is that doctors are professionally obligated to heal rather than to kill—the American Medical Association forbids its members to participate in executions. So does the American Society of Anesthesiologists. "This could have a chilling effect with patients, if they realize that anesthesiologists can double as executioners," says Orin Guidry, a Charleston, S.C., doctor who is a former president of the ASA. Last year in North Carolina, the state medical board threatened to strip the licenses of doctors who take part in executions. A judge stopped this move, but the ruling is under appeal, and points to the potential hazard of an inconclusive Supreme Court decision: expensive and time-consuming death-penalty litigation that might extend the current moratorium on capital punishment.

That could cost innocent lives. The familiar question of whether the death penalty is a crime deterrent has experienced a recent revival thanks to new analyses. In one sophisticated study that draws upon 25 years of FBI data, Roy D. Adler and Michael Summers of Pepperdine University have calculated that each execution correlates with about 74 fewer murders the following year.

If that number or anything approaching it is accurate, it would mean that obstructions to capital punishment are deadly. **NR**

■ **THE LAW II**

The Left Fires a Counter-Volley

Meet the NRA's little-known, highly influential opponents

ROBERT VERBRUGGEN

If there's one political group every American knows, and maybe fears a little, it's the National Rifle Association. As the Supreme Court gears up to hear arguments on the Second Amendment's meaning—in the context of the District of Columbia's firearm laws, which virtually ban handguns and require that long guns be "unloaded and disassembled or locked"—anyone on the street could tell you where the organization stands.

The NRA is known for pushing legislation and influencing elections, but few would be surprised to learn that it has funded research as well. In early 2003, it pledged $1 million for a Second Amendment professorship at George Mason University. It received $80 million in membership fees alone in 2004, and even some experts on the "anti" side say they're outgunned when it comes to influencing the courts.

No anti-gun organization is nearly as well known, but the NRA has a counterpart: the Joyce Foundation, which at the end of 2006 had almost $1 billion in total assets. It has supported a broad range of gun-control efforts, from research to advocacy, and it approved more than $3.3 million in "gun violence" grants in 2006. Some of these grants have been ethically questionable; in just one example, at the beginning of this decade, a $900,000 donation to the gun-control panel of the National Academy of Sciences—to conduct a study for the government—raised eyebrows.

The Joyce Foundation has entered the Second Amendment–interpretation debate as well. There are two broad theories to choose from: The individual-right theory holds that American citizens have a right to own firearms for personal use. Collective-right theorists say the Constitution protects only states' rights to arm their own militias. The individual-right interpretation gained

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much ground in law journals during the ’80s and ’90s, so Joyce began issuing grants for Second Amendment symposiums at law schools. The papers presented at these symposiums appeared in special issues of the schools’ law reviews.

“The courts are looking at the whole body of scholarship, and presumably that will affect policies related to firearms,” says Mary O’Connell, director of communications for Joyce. “For that reason it’s of interest to us, but it’s certainly not the center of our program.”

These special law-review issues have disproportionately given voice to interpretations of the Second Amendment that would make it difficult for courts to strike down gun-control laws. This raises the question of whether law reviews—which rest their reputations on objectively considering each article’s merits before publication—compromise their integrity when they participate in activist-funded events. In addition, two law-review issues did not disclose the grants.

The Joyce Foundation directly funded a symposium at the Chicago-Kent College of Law in 2000. Carl T. Bogus, a law professor who’d advised anti-gun groups including the Violence Policy Center (which has received more than $2 million from Joyce since 2003), edited the corresponding issue of *Chicago-Kent Law Review*. Introducing the symposium, Bogus wrote:

> With generous support from the Joyce Foundation, the Chicago-Kent Law Review sponsored this Symposium to take a fresh look at the Second Amendment and, particularly, the collective right theory. This is not, therefore, a balanced symposium. No effort was made to include the individual right point of view. Full and robust public debate is not always best served by having all viewpoints represented in every symposium. Sometimes one point of view requires greater illumination.

When the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals took the collective-right view in 2002, the citation “76 Chi.-Kent L. Rev.” appeared eight times.

In 2003, Joyce provided $400,000 to found the Second Amendment Research Center at Ohio State University’s John Glenn Institute, through which it has dispensed its subsequent symposium money. History professor Saul Cornell, who heads the center, espouses a third, “civic-right” view, according to which the Second Amendment protects individual gun ownership, but only for the purpose of serving in a militia. The center itself takes no official position.

In 2004, Cornell and the *Fordham Law Review* co-hosted a symposium using funds from the Joyce Foundation. The “Editors’ Foreword” to the symposium issue thanks Cornell for “conceiving of this Symposium, co-hosting it, and ensuring the participation and interest of such remarkable panelists.” It makes no mention of the symposium’s Joyce funding. Cornell’s own article does note that “research support for this essay was provided by a grant from the Joyce Foundation.” In 2006 Cornell’s center co-hosted another symposium, at Stanford Law School, but the resulting issue of the *Stanford Law & Policy Review* similarly does not disclose the Joyce funding that made it possible—a $125,000 grant.

“Across the board, on all the different issues, there are foundations funding research. It’s not the case that you’re buying it,” O’Connell says. “We did not decide who came to the symposiums, and we did not decide what articles ran.”

Cornell says that his critics often misrepresent the symposiums, the latest of which, at Albany Law School, his center could afford to fund only partially. While some such events follow a “point-counterpoint” model, his have been dedicated to presenting new research. The individual- and collective-right theories have already been fleshed out in the literature, he says, so other theories tend to better fit this goal. “Joyce did not tell me I have to support the collective-right view,” he says. “In fact, if you count up the articles, the collective-right view is the least represented. Most of the new scholarship has explored the middle ground—limited individual right, militia-based right, civic right, there are different ways to construe it.”

He also notes that he has made efforts to include pro-gun voices. “I even asked the NRA for funding, but they haven’t been forthcoming.” For the Fordham event, “I went out of my way to find Calvin Massey, who took the individual-right view using arguments that hadn’t been published before. I also invited some other people who turned me down.” Still others attended the symposium but chose not to contribute articles for publication. “It’s demonstrably false that those conferences were stacked,” Cornell says.

Also, “I had no editorial function at all—the law-review editors called the shots,” Cornell says. To the extent he had any control—as was the case, for example, with the event flyers—the funding was disclosed. “I was actually surprised that they didn’t; your pointing it out to me was the first I remember noticing it,” he says. He did not see the issues before publication.

John O. Enright, who was managing editor of the *Fordham Law Review* when the symposium issue ran, e-mailed NATIONAL REVIEW a statement on behalf of the review’s editors at the time. He wrote that the law review itself “did not accept any funding for the Second Amendment symposium—our only role was to host the symposium on campus and edit and publish the papers submitted by the symposium’s participants. (If any of the participants or their affiliated organizations received funding to take part in the symposium, we did not ask for or receive any part of that funding.)”

NR failed to reach the *Stanford Law & Policy Review* editors who worked on the issue, but the current editors in chief wrote in an e-mail, “We do not know whether SLPR then had a policy of not mentioning funding sources or whether the omission was inadvertent.” The symposium was the third issue in Volume 17; the other volumes in the publication’s archives contain at most two issues each.

On January 11 a group of historians, led by Bogus and including Cornell, filed a brief to the Supreme Court in support of the D.C. government, including citations to the Chicago-Kent symposium issue. The only funding for the brief itself came from Bogus’s university research budget, according to the document.

It’s unclear which way the court will go. After all, the lower courts are sharply divided—Fifth and D.C. Circuits on the individual side; Seventh and Ninth on the collective—and President Bush’s recent appointments increase the likelihood of an individual-right ruling. But anti-gunners cannot plausibly claim their views have been underfunded or underrepresented in the scholarly literature—the infamous intermingling of “money and politics” (another of the Joyce Foundation’s areas of interest) spills over into academia from both sides. **NR**

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■ **COVER STORY**

Say a Prayer For Hillary

If you want a Republican in the White House, that is

RICHARD LOWRY & KATE O'BEIRNE

At a town-hall meeting in Derry, N.H., in January, Mitt Romney tried to stir the crowd in the immediate aftermath of Barack Obama's upset victory in Iowa: "We cannot afford Barack Obama as the next president!" About two people applauded. The next day, in Nashua, he mentioned Obama, but added, "I can't wait to meet Hillary Clinton face to face." Sustained applause.

Taken together, those two very different reactions provide a reliable barometer of conservative sentiment toward the Democratic candidates. Conservatives have long experience loathing Hillary Clinton. It has become second nature. If they ever do come to feel the same way about Barack Obama—and they may not—it will take time. Hillary Clinton will long hold pride of place as an object of scorn and a source of motivation for conservatives.

Hillary is smart, articulate, and disciplined; she has not made major strategic mistakes in her primary campaign. But she is hampered by his-and-hers political baggage, a fact that is especially apparent when she is compared with the charismatic, seemingly post-partisan Obama.

And Hillary has accrued additional weaknesses as the campaign has progressed. She began with high negatives, a chilly persona, and a liberal voting record. As a Washington insider who personifies an era of bitter partisan politics, she was always going to have to struggle to present herself credibly as "an agent of change," to use the phrase she favors.

But only over the past several weeks has Hillary's campaign given Republicans reason to wish devoutly for her success in the primary. She has earned the vocal disapproval of the liberal elite in a way the Clintons had never quite managed before, even through the fundraising scandals, the Lewinsky affair, and the payola pardons. If she wins the nomination, she will be forced to court the party's angry-Left base at a time when she would be better served by reaching out to the center. She has used Bill as an obvious crutch, weakening her own image and saddling herself with him for the rest of the campaign, while her feminist allies have made it clear they will do all they can to define her candidacy as an exercise in vintage 1970s-style feminism.

Hillary has gone from "inevitable" to "potential general-election disaster." Republican strategists are gleeful over the possibility that she'll win the nomination. What haunts the Grand Old Party is the specter of an Obama primary victory, which would deny Republicans their best opportunity to squeak back into the White House in what otherwise should be a difficult 2008. Republicans disdain Hillary, but feel that they need her—a twisted kind of political codependence.

The biggest shift over the last few weeks in Hillary's standing has been the amazing wave of revulsion directed at the Clintons by the liberal opinion elite. Early in the campaign, Hillary's coverage was positive—sometimes adoring. The media considered it odd that someone so "warm and witty" in person could be such a polarizing figure; only an irrational Hillary-hater, they argued, could see a committed liberal in this sensible moderate who has worked so diligently for bipartisan consensus. That Hillary is history. Now, the narrative is that she's a down-and-dirty fighter who is polarizing her own party's activists. The endearing chuckle has been replaced by a forced cackle.

In the 1990s, liberals felt obliged to defend the Clinton White House against a congressional assault; scare figures such as Newt Gingrich and Kenneth Starr could not be allowed to take down the Democrats' champions. But now there is no Clinton White House, no Republican Congress, no Gingrich and no Starr on the scene. Liberals can consult their moral compass again—and it's pointing toward Obama. If liberals who agree with the

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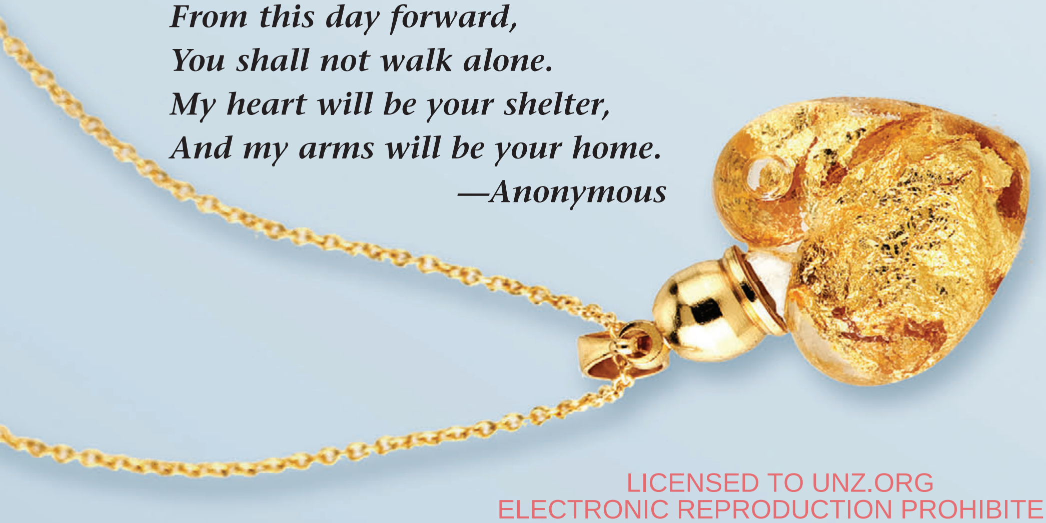

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Clintons on most policy issues can't stand them, wait until voters who don't share that agenda make themselves heard in the fall.

WHAT WENT WRONG

A big part of the trouble, unsurprisingly, is Bill. As late as December, Hillary—in her iteration as policy maven and sensible hawk—had been holding her own on the campaign trail and debate stages. Bill hadn't been much in evidence. Her presidential bid looked like her campaign in New York in 2000. Then Obama beat her in Iowa. Now, Bill is back—and so, too, is Billary; the negative neologism invented by the Right has gained new currency among liberals.

Colbert King, writing in the *Washington Post,* characterizes the Clintons as "two people reeking of self-pity and spoiling for fights with anyone who has the temerity to stand in their way." *St. Petersburg Times* columnist Philip Gailey writes, "If the price of taking down Obama is to tarnish his post–White House image as a global statesman, Clinton doesn't mind paying it. The Big Dog is having too much fun doing what he does best, which is being un-presidential." Nicholas von Hoffman writes in the *The Nation*, "The Clintons cannot compete with the enthusiasm Obama sets off so they must destroy it. Their tactic is disillusionment. They are the quashers of the dream." And on and on it goes.

"I think we've reached an irrevocable turning point in liberal opinion of the Clintons," writes Jonathan Chait in the *Los Angeles Times.* Conservative loathing of Hillary Clinton, he writes, "seems a lot less irrational. We're not frothing Clinton haters like . . . well, name pretty much any conservative. We just really wish they'd go away." He wonders: "Were the conservatives right about Bill Clinton all along?" That is, "right about the Clintons' essential nature?"

Two for the price of one—again

RON SACHS/CONSOLIDATED NEWS PHOTOS

It's not a bad question to ask, even if it is 16 years overdue. Liberals didn't complain when that "essential nature" was on rampant display while the Clintons were in power. From the early years of the Clinton presidency, when conservative talk radio was blamed for the Oklahoma City bombing, to the ruthless campaign to destroy their enemies during the impeachment scandal, the Clintons have always been masters of the low political blow, delivered with unpitying determination and self-righteous indignation.

Liberal op-ed writers and disenchanted former Clintonites aren't huge voting blocs. But they are a symptom of what will be an enduring problem for Hillary. If she wins, she will have to regain support from the party elites. She will have to court affluent liberals, the nostalgic Ted Kennedy crowd, and African-Americans. She already had a problem with the left-wing "netroots," many of whom have long considered her a sellout over the Iraq War. She went to the Yearly Kos convention—where she was booed—and will be obliged to do much more to repair those relationships. MoveOn.org, the liberal outfit originally organized to defend the Clintons from their series of scandals, has endorsed Barack Obama. The closely contested primary means that Hillary will be wooing the most liberal constituencies among her party's die-hards just when she would like to position herself as a pragmatic centrist who can appeal beyond the Democratic base.

Democrats who console themselves by arguing that the fluid GOP field presents Republicans with much the same challenge ignore the different dynamics that kept the parties from settling early on their nominees. Unlike Democrats this season, Republican voters have been promiscuous in their affections, with few deeply attached to any candidate and many capable of being wooed by the candidate of the moment. Such situational commitment makes it far easier to get behind the eventual nominee—especially when he stands in the way of a Clinton Restoration.

The Clinton–Obama dispute is entirely different. It's personal and, with little difference between the two on policy matters, it will stay personal. With relentless ambition and an aggrieved sense of entitlement, Billary has attacked the newly anointed heir to Camelot. Newark's mayor, Cory Booker, an African-American and an Obama supporter, complained, "We're trying to offer an alternative to the Republicans' fear-and-smear campaigns, and now we're being dragged down to their level by the Clintons." For their part, Hillary partisans deeply resent the presumptuous upstart whose supporters have played the race card against such stalwart liberal warriors as the Clintons.

The exuberant crowds, big fundraising totals, and large voter turnout on the Democratic side all demonstrate emotional attachment to particular candidates, which won't be so easy to overcome. Obama's supporters are being asked to abandon not just a candidate, but a dream.

Even today, much of the enthusiasm on the Democratic side is based on hostility to President Bush. Once the Republican nominee eclipses him, Clinton, if she is the nominee, will need to enthuse those voters all by herself. Even if she wins over Obama, she won't necessarily win over his voters. The Obama coalition includes independents and new voters who may be peeled away by a Republican nominee. Obama won a plurality of them in Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada, and South Carolina (where he won independent voters by 42 percent to Hillary's 26 percent). These voters have been both pushed toward the Democrats by Bush and the war, and pulled toward the Democrats by Obama's appeal. Will they stay excited by the divisive candidate who beat their guy with dirty tactics?

BOTTLING BUBBA

Absent some dramatic development, it will be impossible to put Bill back in the bottle so that Hillary can establish her independence again. In 1992, "two for the price of one" worked, even if nobody was quite sure what it meant. The implicit promise was that a loyal wife and committed children's advocate would be at the president's side. But "two for the price of one" now means a

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Peace in the Middle East (1)

Can it be achieved under the present circumstances?

After almost sixty years of the bizarre notion of not recognizing the “existence” of the State of Israel, after many years after the Oslo Accord “peace process”, and after being offered unbelievably generous conditions to bring an end to the long and bloody conflict, the Palestinians have rejected those terms and have instead chosen to continue on their path of violence and confrontation. They have erupted in the bloody Al-Aksa Intifada, which so far has caused hundreds of dead and thousands of injured. The question can be raised whether peace with the Palestinians is possible at all.

What are the facts?

The Root of the Middle East Conflict. Many observers of the Middle East scene seem to believe that the root of the Middle East conflict lies in the dispute between the Palestinians and the Israeli Jews — that peace could come to the area if that conflict could be resolved. And the way it should be resolved, these observers believe, is by Israel’s yielding its heartland, Judea/Samaria (the “West Bank”), in addition to the already yielded Gaza Strip, for the creation of a Palestinian state and by returning the Golan Heights to Syria. But after the late Hafez Assad’s brusque refusal to accept the return of the Golan (because it would not include the shores of the Sea of Galilee), and after the late and unlamented Arafat’s contemptuous refusal of Ehud Barak’s generous offer, it is clear that the Arabs do not want peace — they want confrontation and the destruction of Israel.

> “Real peace . . . can only happen through a complete change of mentality, policies, and historical ambitions in the Muslim block.”

People also overlook that the conflict between Palestinian Arabs and Jews long predates Israel’s control over the administered territories, that Arab-Arab wars are endemic in the area, and that Israel would be defenseless and at the mercy of its implacable enemies if it were to yield control of these strategic territories without a full peace — not just with the Palestinians, but with all the Arabs and Muslims.

The Menace of Islamic Fundamentalism. The clamor for yielding strategic territories to the Arabs is the first step in the immutable Arab attempt to liquidate Israel altogether. Because, certainly, Israel, with its fewer than 6 million inhabitants, compared to almost 300 million Arabs, and with its less than 10,000 square miles, compared to almost 5 million square miles of the Arab countries, cannot possibly be a threat to peace or a menace to the Arabs. And reducing the territory of Israel from 10,000 square miles to 7,000 square miles would not seem likely to bring peace one step closer. The main reason that real peace is so difficult to attain is the political and cultural context of the Middle East, which is dominated by the menace of Islamic fundamentalism. By the tenets of this fundamentalism, Israel’s size is not of importance; it is the very existence of Israel that, to fundamentalist believers, is an intolerable offense, an unacceptable insult to Islam. The fundamentalist Muslims — Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and all the others — do not aim at peace with Israel or the recovery of some territory. Their publicly declared aim is the destruction of the Jewish State. On more than one occasion, the Islamic Jihad has stated: “[This is] irrevocable . . . We will be satisfied with nothing but the destruction of Israel.”

Real Peace Must Be Global. The current upheavals in Israel, in its administered territories, and in the areas that Israel has transferred to the Palestinian Authority, may give the impression that peace would come to the region if Israel would come to terms with the aspirations of the Palestinians. But that is impossible, because the destruction of Israel — its disappearance from the map — is the stated purpose of the Palestinians, as embedded in their never-revoked Covenant. But even if it were achievable, peace would not come about, because such a peace would be a non-global one. The most fervent enemies of Israel — Iran, Syria, and including even Egypt (with which Israel is technically at peace) — have as their principal foreign policy goal the destruction of Israel, a goal that would not be altered even if Israel acceded to every wish of the Palestinians. Those Arab statesmen who have tried to come to terms with the Jewish State have invariably found a terrible end. King Abdullah of Transjordan was assassinated by the rejectionists, so was President Anwar Sadat of Egypt, and so was President Bashir Gemayel of Lebanon, all of whom envisioned peaceful cooperation and co-existence with Israel. Every Arab leader knows that any overt declaration of wishing to make real peace and to co-exist and to cooperate with Israel is a suicidal death sentence.

We all want peace, of course, especially the Israelis, who, five wars having been imposed on them, have been almost constantly embattled since the foundation of their state. But because of Arab-Islamic fundamentalism that cannot tolerate a Jewish presence on any part of “Arab territory.” And because any peace arrived at would be non-global, such real peace would seem difficult or impossible to attain at this time. One hopes that real peace — the Arabs’ acceptance of a Jewish State and peaceful co-existence and cooperation with it — will come eventually. But it can only happen through a complete change of mentality, policies and ambitions in the Muslim block, abandonment of fanatic fundamentalism, and change in governance from despotism to genuine democracy. And that may well take a very long time. In the meantime, Israel must keep up its guard and cannot afford — not even to please its friends, including the United States — to yield strategic territory, without which it would be mortally vulnerable.

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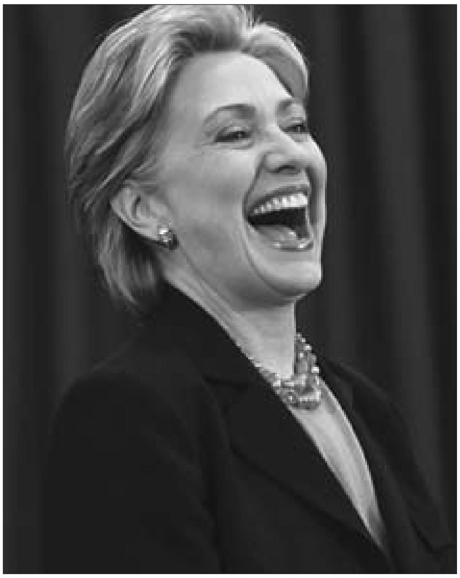
bare-knuckled political tag-team will be back in the White House. Our friend Tracy Mehan asks, "Do the Clintons hunt in pairs like those velociraptors in *Jurassic Park*?" And plenty of people will be asking the same question as Greg Craig, the attorney who represented Bill Clinton during impeachment. Suffering an apparent case of lawyer's remorse, he said, "Recent events raise the question: If Hillary's campaign can't control Bill, whether Hillary's White House could."

A Hillary Clinton candidacy won't have critics merely rehashing yesterday's scandals. Bill's post-presidential activities will be fair game in the campaign. *Newsweek* has already opined that his "private dealings raise inevitable questions about who might come seeking favors if he and Hillary move back into the White House." And in a recent *New York Times* story about Bill's wheeling and dealing on behalf of a major contributor to his private foundation, "Kazakhstan" replaces "Marc Rich" as shorthand for his greedy self-indulgence and adolescent judgment. Given his solicitous nature and his gallery of unsavory friends, an under-occupied Bill surely would be tempted to become the White House's designated favor-dispenser.



'How will people like that laugh in ten months?'

SLOAN BREEDEN/GETTY

Obama has not made this case. Obama's above-it-all image renders a whole swath of Clinton muck untouchable for him. When Hillary hit him for doing legal work for a "slumlord"—all of five hours of it—he couldn't turn back to her and say, "Two words, Hillary—Lincoln Bedroom." A Republican opponent won't be so constrained. Democratic voters may take it as a matter of gospel that all the Clinton scandals were nothing. The general public does not.

Hillary may also become a victim of her own identity politics. Barack Obama didn't become the "black candidate" of his own volition. When the Clintons started poking him in provocative ways, Obama wasn't quick to take offense on racial grounds—but his supporters were, and that was sufficient. Hillary risks having feminists do the same thing on her behalf (whether she likes it or not) and becoming the "feminist candidate."

Clinton will not win the presidency as the aggrieved feminist candidate whose opponents fear powerful women. Her campaign wisely backed off the charge that the guys unfairly ganged up on her during the debate in Philadelphia, but her surrogates kept it up. Following the encounter, the New York chapter of NOW took up poor Hillary's cause, declaring, "Gang-raping of women is commonplace in our culture, both physically and metaphorically." Her feminist sisters blamed her ordeal on the "patriarchal system that has persisted for millennia."

New York's feminists reacted to Ted Kennedy's endorsement of Obama by accusing him of an outrageous betrayal. "This latest move by Kennedy is so telling about the status of respect for women's rights, women's voices, women's equality, women's authority and our ability—indeed, our obligation—to promote and earn and deserve and elect, unabashedly, a president that is the first woman after centuries of men 'who know what's best for us,'" New York NOW wrote. Gloria Steinem and Erica Jong also promote Hillary by railing against the patriarchy.

The feminist stamp won't help Hillary's campaign deliver male voters. Democrats already have trouble with men—especially white men. No Democratic candidate has won more than 43 percent of white men since Jimmy Carter in 1976. Al Gore won only 36 percent of them in 2000, and John Kerry only 37 percent four years later. Democratic strategist William Galston has explained, "The gender gap is more a reflection of men leaving the Democratic party than of women joining it." He faults the "high-profile extremists" on the left for proclaiming white men "racist and patriarchal oppressors. . . . Republican strength among white men more than offsets Democrats' dominance of the African-American vote."

In South Carolina, more than 70 percent of white Democratic and independent men voted against Hillary Clinton. The female voters she is banking on are neither feminists nor the monolithic bloc of feminist fantasy. John Kerry carried the overall women's vote by three points, but lost white women by eleven points and married women without college degrees by 16 points.

RUN, HILLARY, RUN

These new or freshly evident vulnerabilities come on top of longstanding weaknesses that already had many Republicans rooting for Hillary to get the nomination before her latest round of troubles. "She has tremendous baggage, high negatives, and she can't be the candidate of change," says a top Republican strategist who pines for her to be the nominee. He explains that swing voters decide on the basis of personality and broad issues, such as whether or not the country is on the right track. He believes that Hillary opens up possibilities for Republicans in the same way that Al Gore and John Kerry did—in fact, she has the potential to act like a vote-repelling combination of the two. "Even though [swing voters] thought the country was on the right track, they didn't like Al Gore," the Republican strategist says of the 2000 election. Republicans won in 2004 through massive turnout. "She turns out the Republican base in a major way," he says. "The more people see her, the less they like her. How will people like that laugh in ten months?"

Republican pollster Frank Luntz reports that when he conducts focus groups of 30 swing voters in states such as Ohio, Florida, and Missouri, about 15 participants typically hate Hillary while only two express any hostility toward Obama.

Hillary's negative ratings remain a significant liability for her. She managed to get them down to 42–43 percent before the race got heated with Obama, but they have been creeping back up into the high 40s. Before the general election is over, they will surely be above 50 percent, and the only way she'll be able to win is

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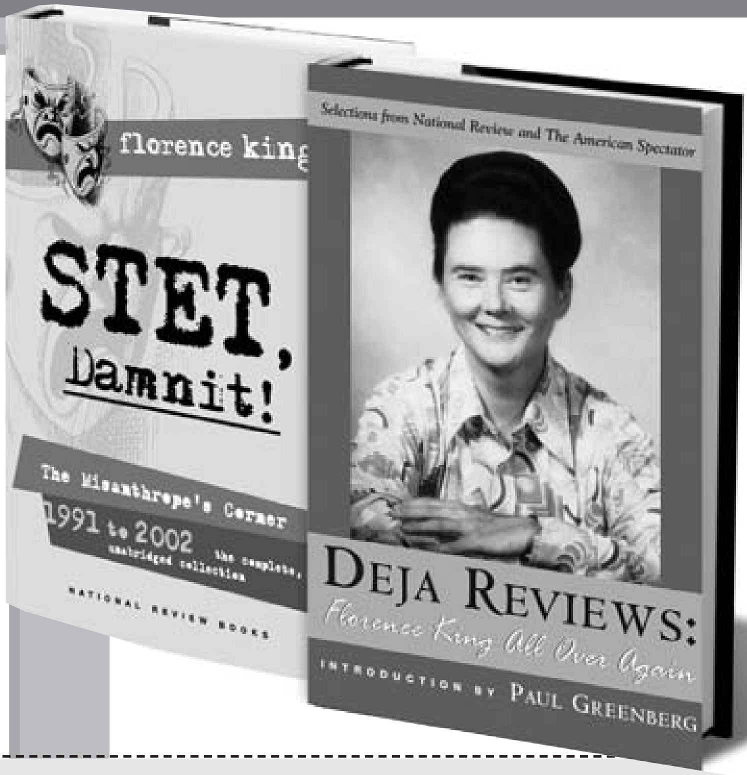
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to get her Republican opponent's negative rating above 50 as well. In other words, she'll have to depend on a mud-fest to get elected. As in her nomination fight, she may rely on her husband to handle the attacks. If disenchanted Democrats have had their fill of Bill, voters in the general election without a previous allegiance to the former president are even less likely to welcome his surrogate role.

Republicans will be adding a quadrennial favorite—scrutinizing liberal voting records—to the gauntlet of attacks that Hillary Clinton will endure. Democrats were taken aback by the effectiveness of assaults on John Kerry as a "Massachusetts liberal" based on his history in the Senate. Hillary's rating from the liberal group Americans for Democratic Action for her Senate votes between 2001 and 2006 is 95.8—a score higher than Joe Biden's or Chris Dodd's, and almost 20 points above John Edwards's during his six years in the Senate.

There is bipartisan recognition that Hillary Clinton would be a liability for Democratic candidates seeking election in the fall. Congressional Republicans acknowledge the uphill fight they face with an unpopular president, an unpopular war, and a dispirited base. The good news they look forward to is the nomination of Hillary. A House Republican leader believes that about 40 of the 60 House Democrats in congressional districts carried by George Bush in 2004 are vulnerable. He predicts they will be even more vulnerable when "we can hang Hillary around their necks." GOP leaders also expect their anemic fundraising to pick up if Republicans are running against Hillary.

Across the aisle, Democratic officeholders from red and swing states will make it their business to get the Democrat most palatable to Middle America on the top of the ticket. In their judgment, Hillary does not seem to be that candidate. Even after he lost New Hampshire, Obama picked up the endorsements of Democratic senators Tim Johnson (S.D.), Ben Nelson (Neb.), Claire McCaskill (Mo.). Arizona governor Janet Napolitano soon joined the parade. After Obama's win in South Carolina, Kansas governor Kathleen Sebelius endorsed him, too.

While Hillary Clinton must change voters' negative opinions about her and her husband, Barack Obama is introducing himself to the national electorate. Like Hillary, Obama is a conventional liberal. *National Journal*'s annual survey rated him the most liberal member of the Senate in 2007, but that's not what people associate with him (at least not yet). He taps into the deep-seated desire for less partisanship of the variety that Hillary represents. Nervous Republicans recognize the challenge his nomination would represent. His negatives could be driven up by attacks, but that would be a delicate operation. Given that his supporters cried racism in response to criticisms from fellow Democrats, Republican critics must dread what will be in store for them if they attempt to strangle the dream.

Barack Obama scores high on the likeability scale, appears to represent the change that restive voters are clamoring for, and enjoys the kind of fawning media coverage that is a distant memory for the Clintons. Republicans must hope that, over the demanding months ahead, his relative inexperience in national politics will be a handicap, his soaring rhetoric will ring hollow, and his appealing personality will be no match for misgivings about his thin résumé.

For Republicans, the choice is clear: Go Hillary! **NR**

THE ECONOMY

A More Equal Capitalism

Preserving the free-market consensus

JIM MANZI

FEARS of a recession have suddenly made economic policy a hot topic among the chattering classes. It is a fashionable belief among elites that the Reagan economic policy of lower taxes and freer markets has run out of gas, that the problems of high taxes and overregulation are mostly solved, and that we need to move on to address the new and different economic problems that we now face. I believe that this analysis misreads both the Reagan Revolution and our current economic situation.

Post-war U.S. economic policy was made by a generation of statesmen who dealt themselves a great hand of cards, and then played it brilliantly. It is hard to exaggerate the strength of the U.S. competitive position in the world economy in June 1945: America accounted for an absolute majority of all global manufacturing output, had the most technologically advanced economy in the world with ample supplies of natural resources, and could protect this state of affairs with an invincible military that possessed a nuclear monopoly. Most of the rest of the world was either in ruins, pre-industrial, or under the control of Communist regimes that smothered economic energies.

The reaction of most great powers in this situation would have been to declare direct, long-term control over as much of the globe as possible. Instead, the U.S. established itself as the *primus inter pares* of a loose coalition of nations that became known as the Free World, and established a set of politico-economic institutions and programs—NATO, the Marshall Plan, the Bretton Woods system, the IMF, the World Bank, and so forth—that encouraged rapid economic development within this coalition. Combined with the containment approach vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, this worked out very well for us.

One of the problems with this strategy, of course, was that it did work. While America got much richer, those nations in the coalition that had previously had advanced economies, predominantly Western Europe and Japan, really did develop to the point that by the 1970s they started to become economic competitors to the U.S.

The global circumstances that allowed the United States to have it all—high rates of economic and wage growth along with a high degree of economic equality—changed for the worse in the 1970s as other countries started to compete more effectively and the oil shocks battered the economy. Repeated attempts to apply Keynesian band-aids failed to get the economy to perform as it had

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in prior decades. The feeling of crisis at that time was not illusory.

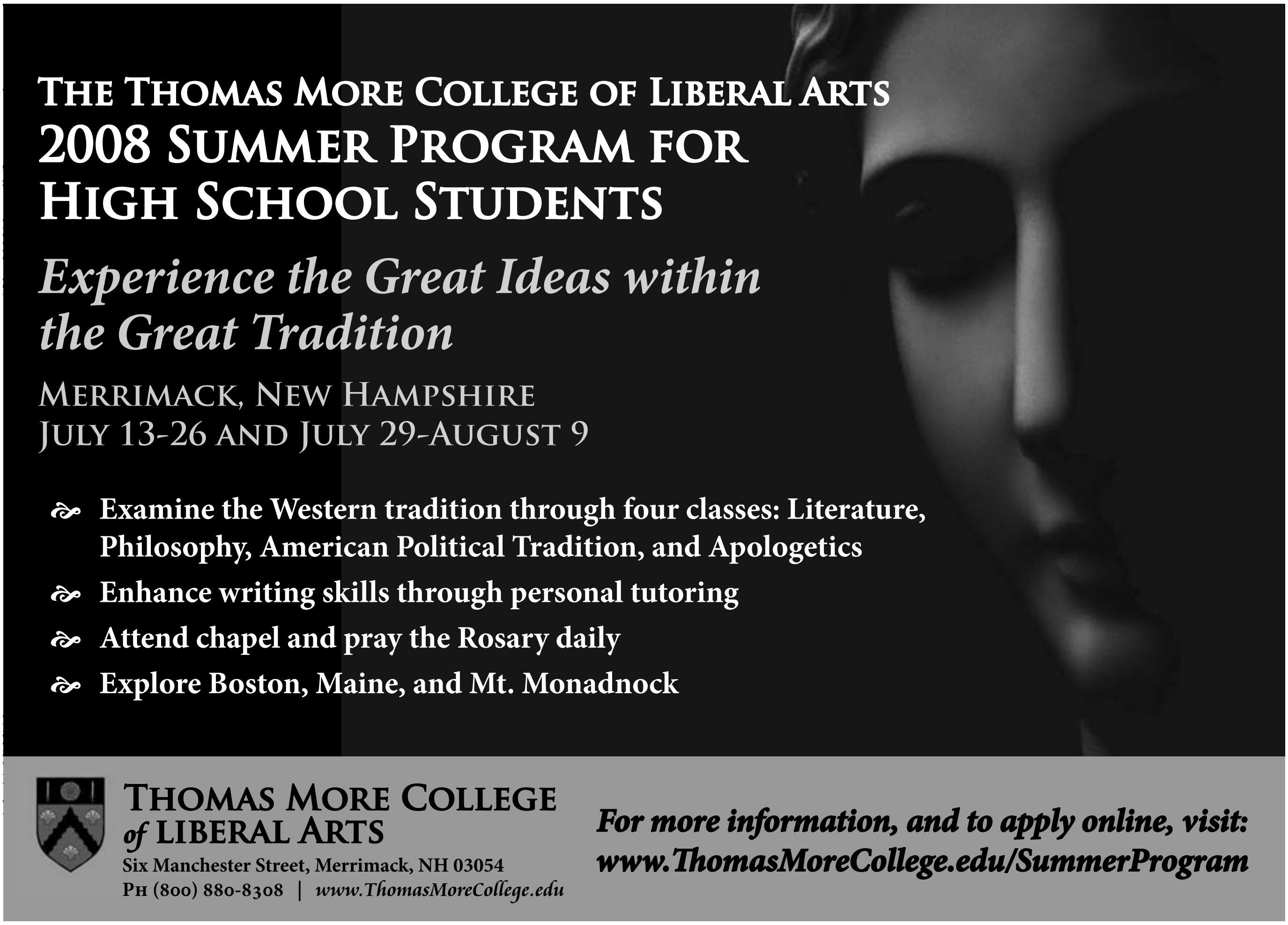
Reagan's solution proceeded from two diagnoses: that macroeconomic pump-priming was merely creating inflation, not growth, and that the U.S. economy had large untapped growth potential that was thwarted by many of the restrictions on markets that were part of the then-current economic consensus, including everything from price controls to government support for private-sector unionization to zealous antitrust enforcement. The Reagan economic strategy was therefore sound money plus deregulation, broadly defined.

It succeeded. Conventional wisdom in 1980 was that the U.S. would not be able to compete with Europe and Japan without becoming more statist, but over the past 25 years the U.S. has re-emerged as the acknowledged global economic leader. Economic output per person is 20 to 25 percent higher in the U.S. than in Japan and the major European economies, and the U.S. economy dominates in size and prestige.

Ironically, with our victory in the Cold War, international economic competition has only become more severe. The primary geostrategic fact in the current world is the economic rise of the Asian heartland. While precise long-run predictions are usually a fool's errand, it's a pretty safe assumption that economic and strategic competition is likely to increase yet further over the next several decades. The economic world of 1955 is gone. Even if we wanted it back, short of emerging from another global war unscathed while the rest of the world is smoking rubble, we could not have it. The alternative strategy of simply opting out of international economic competition in order to focus on quality of life is not feasible without some kind of external military protection. Sooner or later, those who oppose our values would become strong enough to take away our wealth and freedom. And to remain strong enough to protect ourselves, we must have the economic performance created by freer markets.

PROSPEROUS BUT UNEQUAL

It is true, however, that as America has continued to become much richer over the past several decades, it has also become more unequal. The share of income received by households in the top fifth of the income distribution, after taxes have been paid and government transfers have been received, rose from 42 percent in 1979 to 50 percent in 2004, while the share of income received by those in the bottom fifth of the distribution declined from 7 percent to 5 percent. The share of after-tax income garnered by the households in the top 1 percent of the income distribution increased from 8 percent in 1979 to 14 percent in 2004. A workaday senior partner in an investment-banking, corporate-law, or management-consulting firm can now expect to make $1 million per year. In the stratosphere of the economy, the increases in wealth have been



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mind-boggling. According to *Forbes*, the 400th wealthiest person in America in 1982 had $91 million (in 1982 dollars); today the 400th wealthiest American is a billionaire.

This inequality is partially driven by several major transitions that began to occur in the economy and society in the 1970s. First, U.S. domestic production of oil peaked in 1971, oil imports doubled between 1970 and 1975, and OPEC was able simultaneously to drive large price increases. This oil shock was directly regressive, but also tended disproportionately to hammer those industries that were the source of high-wage union jobs. Second, in 1970 "non-distributive services" (i.e., finance, professional services, health care, and so on) became for the first time a larger part of the private economy than goods-producing industries. The shift to services, especially as leveraged by the increasing technology dependence of the economy, tended to enhance the prospects of the cognitive elite at the expense of traditional industrial workers. Third, the combination of changes in cultural mores and social programs began to disassemble the traditional family. The social capital transmitted by intact families became a more and more relevant source of competitive advantage to those individuals raised in functioning homes as this family structure became less universal. Fourth, the foreign-born percentage of the U.S. population, which had reached its historical minimum in 1970, began to rise rapidly as massive immigration resumed after a multi-decade hiatus. This increased inequality by introducing a large low-income group to the population, and also by intensifying wage competition at the lower-skill end of the income scale.

The Reagan economic revolution achieved success by forcing an extremely painful restructuring on industry after industry. One critical consequence of this restructuring was a new compensation paradigm—one that relies on markets rather than corporate diktats, regulation, or historical norms to set pay; accepts a much higher degree of income disparity based on market-denominated performance; and expects that most people will exploit the resulting market for talent by moving from company to company many times during a career. These factors interacted with and exacerbated trends toward inequality in the U.S. Growing inequality was a price we paid for the economic growth that we needed.

Absolute income equality, a.k.a. communism, is a poor goal, but if inequality becomes sufficiently extreme it undermines the social support required for a democratic and capitalist society to flourish. To take only the most obvious example, how much do you think high-income Americans would make in the absence of our armed forces? All of the material delights that we enjoy ultimately require men to stand watch all night looking through Starlight scopes mounted on assault rifles, and die if necessary, to protect the commercial, law-bound society that provides those delights. Would you do that for a millionaire hedge-fund manager who happens to live within a country that he considers some lines on a map, and who considers you a sucker for doing it? The United States is nowhere near such a dystopia, but it's generally not a good idea to keep pulling bolts from an airplane in mid-flight just because it hasn't crashed yet.

So here we have our current economic situation: We are rich and economically successful, but increasingly unequal. If we give up the market-based reforms that allow us to prosper, we will lose by eventually allowing international competitors to defeat us; but if we let inequality grow unchecked, we will lose by eventually hollowing out the middle class and threatening social cohesion. This, not some happy-talk about the end of history, is what "globalization" means for the U.S.

OLD SCHOOL

Liberals are reaping great political gains by talking about these problems, even though their proposed solutions remain antediluvian: Solve the problem of inequality by raising taxes on the "rich"; reregulate the economy to protect the "weak"; and deploy Mondale-style industrial policy by other names to deal with the challenges of globalization. Senator Barack Obama has proposed a combination of a higher income tax and elimination of the income cap on Social Security contributions that would, when all added up, push the effective maximum marginal tax rate to about 55 percent. Hillary Clinton has seriously called for a 90-day foreclosure moratorium and a five-year freeze in rates on subprime mortgages. The Democratic party has never assimilated the need for an increasingly market-based economy, so their "solutions" are a recipe for decline. But you can't beat a horse with no horse, and conservatives need to propose policies that address the real problem of growing inequality and consequent feelings of economic insecurity.

If inequality becomes sufficiently extreme it undermines the social support required for a democratic and capitalist society to flourish.

Seen in this light, the challenge in front of us is clear: How do we continue to increase the market orientation of the American economy, while helping more Americans to participate in it more equally?

Many longstanding conservative policies, like reducing the capital-gains tax rate, serve the goal of increasing performance, but at the expense of increasing inequality. Many recent reform policies, like expanding the child tax credit and applying it against the payroll tax, serve the goal of increasing equality, but don't contribute (at least directly) to greater performance. Both are excellent ideas, and should be championed, but we also need to search for policies that can serve both goals simultaneously.

Consider the problem of education. U.S. public schools are in desperate need of improvement, and have been for decades. We do not prepare the average child in the U.S. to succeed against international competition. Schools can do only so much to fix this—in a nation where 37 percent of births are out of wedlock, many children will be left behind—but it would be a great start if so many schools didn't go out of their way to make kids lazy and stupid.

No amount of money or number of programs will create anything more than marginal improvements, because public schools are organized to serve teachers and administrators rather than students and families. We need competition for students among public schools in which funding moves with students, and in which schools are far freer to change how they operate. As we have seen in the private economy, only markets will force the unpleasant restructuring necessary to unleash potential. Conservatives have long had this goal, but are unprepared to win the fight. Achieving it would be at least a decade-long project.

We should start at the state and local level by scaling up the numerous existing demonstration projects to district, city, and state levels. This can be used to build sufficient pressure to force national action, using the federal education budget as a lever. The model to follow is the successful campaign to reform welfare. The biggest difference in this case is the presence of the extremely powerful teachers unions. Ultimately, political leaders will have to break them as decisively as Thatcher broke the coal-miners union in Britain.

The role of the federal government could be limited, but crucial. Suppose it established a comprehensive national exam by grade level to be administered by all schools and universities that receive any federal money, and required each school to publish all results, along with other detailed data about school budgets, performance, and so forth, each year. Secondary, profit-driven information providers, analogous to credit-ratings agencies and equity analysts, would arise to inform decision-making. The federal role would be very much like that of the SEC for equity markets: to ensure that each school published accurate, timely, and detailed data.

Once success is obvious, this can act as a platform for further change. This approach will build a constituency with an entrenched interest as powerful as the one that protects Social Security, and eliminate a major prop of the statist coalition. Inevitably, parents will demand and win the right to apply these vouchers to private schools. This would also become a model for other reforms—of entitlement programs from retirement accounts to medical care.

Or consider immigration. What if, once we had control of our southern border, we came to view the goal of immigration policy as recruiting instead of law enforcement? Once we established a target number of immigrants per year, we could set up recruiting offices looking for the best possible talent everywhere from Beijing to Helsinki. It would be great for America as a whole to have, say, 500,000 very smart, motivated people move here each year with the intention of becoming citizens. It would also do wonders for equality if they were not almost all desperately poor, unskilled, and competing with already-low-wage workers.

Other examples of policies that can raise competitiveness and reduce inequality—ranging from reduced small-business regulation to allowing individuals tax deductibility for private health-care purchases to automatic (with an opt-out) enrollment for 401(k) plans—become obvious once you start to look for them. What they tend to have in common is a focus on building human capital and effective market institutions.

That is: They build the key resources of the new economy. **NR**

■ FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hot Seats

Facing up to the world in a glorious Alpine setting

JAY NORDLINGER

Davos, Switzerland

EVERY year they come, to the jamboree staged by the World Economic Forum, high up in the Alps: kings and queens, presidents and prime ministers, power-holders and glitterati of all kinds. There is always a smattering of arts types, and this year we have Emma Thompson, the actress, and Yo-Yo Ma, the cellist. Also Alice Waters, the chef (a kind of artist). And two rockers: Peter Gabriel and Bono. One morning, Bono and Al Gore put on a show, titled "A Unified Earth Theory: Combining Solutions to Extreme Poverty and the Climate Crisis." Nifty how that works out, huh?

Business is represented by men and women at its commanding heights, including Indra Nooyi, who runs Pepsi; Rupert Murdoch, who runs some of our favorite media outlets; and Bill Gates, who invented the modern world (or something). It occurs to me that I've never seen Gates out of a sweater. It then occurs to me that I've never seen him outside the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum—which takes place in the middle of the Swiss winter.

Henry Kissinger is a co-chairman of this event, and he makes a weighty observation. Every part of the world is changing significantly, and these parts are changing at the same time. Moreover, the changes are linked. Kissinger cannot think of a precedent for this in history. And at this gathering are several figures who occupy important places in this world convulsion.

Pervez Musharraf has a well-nigh impossible job—president of Pakistan. He comes to Davos in the wake of the assassination of one of his political rivals, Benazir Bhutto. He himself has survived assassination attempts. And his country is considered one of the world's touchiest powderkegs. In previous visits to Davos, Musharraf has appeared calm, cool, and crisp. This year, however, he seems somewhat flustered, under strain—a little off his game. One can well imagine why. Riding a tiger can be hard on the nerves.

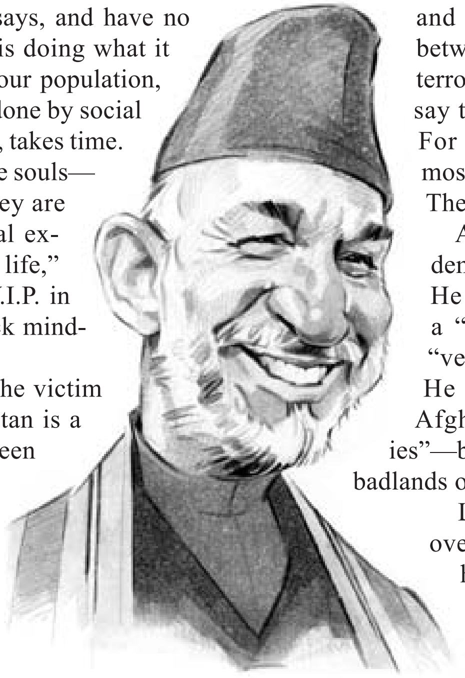
Musharraf is eager to talk of Pakistan's upcoming elections. They will be "free, fair, transparent, and peaceful," he says. He defends the democratic progress his country has made—halting as that progress may have been. And he has a plea for his Western listeners: "Give us some time to adopt what you achieved over centuries." He admonishes us about how to "judge" a developing country: "Don't use Western eyes. Try to see it from the point of view of that country. We are arriving at democracy in our own ways."

As you know, this is the sort of relativism that makes many people groan. And some groaning may be in order. But I can't help smiling as I listen to Musharraf, because he reminds me of the good liberals and leftists by whom I was taught. “Ethnocentrism” was one of the biggest sins you could commit; we were not to see *anybody* through Western eyes.

Musharraf discusses two blights on his land: al-Qaeda and the Taliban. The first are foreigners, he says, and have no right to be in Pakistan. The government is doing what it can to rout them. The Taliban are “from our population, and we have to wean them away.” This is done by social and economic amelioration, and, of course, takes time. As for suicide bombers, they are vulnerable souls—often “below normal,” mentally—and they are preyed on by wily and merciless political extremists. “If a person is miserable in this life,” says Musharraf, “he dreams of being a V.I.P. in heaven.” And suicide bombing, in this sick mindset, provides a ticket.

The president insists that Pakistan is “the victim of misperceptions and distortions.” Pakistan is a nuclear state, and “unfortunately we are seen as unstable.” (You don’t say?) People think that “our nuclear assets can fall into the wrong hands.” Musharraf assures the Davos audience that this is not the case: There are sophisticated and multilayered controls in place, in accordance with the strictest international standards. And he objects to the phrase “Islamic bomb.” No one talks of a Hindu bomb, he says, or a Jewish bomb, or a Christian one. “Why is this bomb”—Pakistan’s—“an Islamic bomb?”

It is a point he has made before, and one of his more piquant.



Hamid Karzai

DARREN GYGI

THE CENTER OF IT ALL

Barham Salih occupies a hot seat, but perhaps not as hot as Musharraf’s: He is deputy prime minister of Iraq. He says that a huge transition is taking place in Iraq, a great shift of history. He urges us to place Iraq’s problems “in context.” The entire Middle East is changing; Iraq is at the center of it all.

When the U.S. toppled Saddam Hussein, Salih says, expectations were too high. The tyrant was gone, and many Iraqis expected to live happily ever after. Democracy would simply fall into place. Instead, the road has been very hard. Iraq has experienced “a tornado of terrorism,” says Salih—terror committed in the name of Islam. And have Muslim leaders spoken out against it? Outside Iraq, he says, very few. Now, however, Iraq is at last on the way to beating extremism and terror. If it can be done in Anbar Province, it can be done throughout the country.

And remember this, he says: Whatever Iraq’s current travails—and there are many—“they pale in comparison with the horrors we endured under Saddam Hussein.” I bet not many remember this—outside Iraq.

Someone asks Salih whether Iraqis want American forces to go home. Sure, he says—and Americans want the same thing, for their forces. But it will take more time for Iraqi society to gain the ability to “fend off regional predators.” How much more time? That is a question of the hour, but it goes unaddressed in this particular session, and is probably unanswerable.

Occupying a very hot seat is Hamid Karzai, the president of Afghanistan. In a speech before all Davos, he says that his country faces two awful problems: terrorism and poppies—narcotics. And there is a link between them, as, “unfortunately for all of us,” terror has become a business. He is at pains to say that terrorism is not a respecter of Islam. For example, terrorists recently blew up a mosque in Peshawar, killing over 50 people. They had been saying their Eid prayers.

About terrorism, Karzai is as clear and condemnatory as President Bush could ever be. He says that the civilized world is fighting a “political mutant,” a “Frankenstein,” a “venomous snake,” which must be crushed. He stresses that the terrorists bloodying Afghanistan must be hit in their “sanctuaries”—by which he apparently means the so-called badlands on the Pakistani border.

Later, Karzai meets a group of journalists over coffee. And he is elegant, as always. I have seen him in cape (of course), and in both cap and cape. I have never seen him capeless—which he is now. (He is capless, too.) Greeting us individually, Karzai is warm and direct—an affable politician, you might say. And he is the picture of contentment. A journalist comments, “Your country is full of troubles, yet you always seem so calm, happy, and serene. Like a Buddhist monk or something.”

Karzai responds that there is a lot of good in Buddhism. Then he says that Afghan people, as a rule, are happy—and if we go there, we will see for ourselves. Yes, there are horrific problems. But there are wedding celebrations, birthday celebrations, and other expressions of joy. For the past six years, says the president, “there has been more happiness for us than sorrow.”

The nation has been “reborn,” he says. The Afghan flag is flying all over the world; in former times, Afghanistan had to be represented by Pakistan in international forums (like Davos). There is a constitution, a proper government, a free press—“*very* critical,” says Karzai, with a friendly growl. Elections are held with “full vigor and zeal.” The country has rebuilt its army, and is rebuilding its police. Women have been returned to civic life; girls have been returned to school. Universities and university students proliferate. Electricity is spreading, and so are medical facilities.

And best of all? Karzai says something I have heard him say before—it obviously means a lot to him. Six years ago, Afghanistan was one of the worst countries in the world for childhood and maternal mortality. Not any longer.

So, those are the fruits of the liberation wrought by the United States and its allies. And the sorrow, the “failures,” as Karzai says? What he discussed in his earlier address: terrorism and narcotics. If Afghanistan can overcome those problems, says Karzai, “we will be a normal poor country, trying to get a little better.” *A normal poor country*. That is a striking aspiration.

AMERICAN POWER

A British journalist has a question: “America’s power is waning, and no one is in charge in America. So where does that leave you?” Karzai is somewhat nonplussed by this, as you might imagine. He says that, without America, Afghanistan would still be occupied by al-Qaeda and other extremists. The Americans are helping the country with billions of dollars, says Karzai, and many troops. America is the “bulwark” of the effort for Afghanistan. And U.S. power “is not diminished.”

I have seen it time after time in Davos: A journalist—usually British or American—asks a question tinged with anti-U.S. bias. And the leader being questioned—usually Third World—says something defensive about America. Pervez Musharraf is especially good at this.

Another journalist asks Karzai how much of Afghanistan he actually controls. Karzai answers that he controls the whole of the country in one sense; and the greater part of it in another. What he means is, he controls the whole of the country in that he is the legitimate leader of all. This comes through elections, the constitution—the entire democratic framework. But he does not exercise direct, practical control over the whole country now. That will come “eventually,” he promises.

Karzai talks about a man whose home was mistakenly bombed by coalition forces—this cost the man many members of his family. And someone asks why in the world Western powers are bombing innocent people. Karzai says that such mistakes are less frequent now; the coalition is making a big effort to be careful. But mistakes will happen in war, Karzai observes. Just last night—the night before our coffee—the coalition mistakenly killed nine members of the Afghan armed forces. But remember, says Karzai: The allies have lost people in such mistakes, too. The Americans have, the Canadians have . . .

Seldom have I seen a leader so cool, and unhistrionic, and un-demagogic—so mature.

Another question: Do the Afghan people want Americans out of their country? Karzai smiles. When he was first elected, people would come up to him and say two things: “Congratulations, Mr. President”; and, “Can you send international forces to our village?” Not much has changed, says Karzai. Afghans do not feel themselves under occupation. They know that, without the U.S. and its partners, “we’d go back to the terrible period of six years ago.”

Yet another question: “Where is bin Laden?” Karzai says confidently that bin Laden is not in Afghanistan. He seems to imply Pakistan (but is not explicit). And he vows that, someday, “we’ll get him.” Bin Laden has killed “so many innocent people,” Karzai explains. He is “the number-one criminal in the world.” Karzai remembers the World Trade Center in New York, and the people jumping off the highest floors. Funny, but I myself have not heard anyone mention this in a long, long time. Talk of the particulars of 9/11—and footage of it—seems verboten back home.

As he leaves the room, Karzai spies figs in a bowl, laid out for this session. He takes one, commenting that they do not have figs in Afghanistan. He seems happy and serene as usual—almost carefree. And few leaders can have more cares.

STRANGE APPOINTMENT

Condoleezza Rice is here, and, in fact, gave the keynote address. Having decided to do something “risky” (her word), she outlined and defended American ideals. She also counseled patience—patience with those groping their way toward democracy. And she said something about Iran. If they will cool their nuclear program, “I will meet my counterpart anytime, anyplace, anywhere, to talk about anything. I don’t know how to make a stronger invitation than that.” Well, the Iranian foreign minister happens to be here in Davos. Rice does not meet with him (to my knowledge). But I do.

The foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, comes to the same room in which President Karzai spoke. Same bowl of figs, I’m guessing. I am two seats away from Mottaki, looking through windows at the snow-covered Alps. It would be hard to imagine a more beautiful or glorious setting. And a much overused word comes to me: “surreal.” The situation in which I find myself is surreal.

I think about what the Iranian government does to people: kidnap them, torture them, brutalize them in every way conceivable. This is a government that stones girls to death for the crime of having been gang-raped. And then there are the nuclear threats (or, from the mouth of Iran’s president, promises). We’re talking about a regime that strongly deserves its place in the Axis of Evil.

And what would be the appropriate analogy here? Am I sitting next to, or very near, Foreign Minister Ribbentrop, in 1938? Or am I sitting with his predecessor, Neurath, in, say, 1936? Nineteen thirty-five? And what do you ask an official of such a regime? I think of a story told about Lady Astor. She is at some affair in the Kremlin, and she says, “Hello, Mr. Stalin, when are you going to stop killing people?”

Mottaki goes into his act—an act he has performed at Davos conferences before. Israel is an abomination, an offense to human rights; the United States is a bully and a malefactor. These are obviously the twin Satans—little and big. As he talks, Mottaki uses a phrase that pricks my ears: “peace-loving nation.” He says that Iran is a “peace-loving nation,” which is just how the Soviet Union used to describe itself. Do you remember? The Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies were “peace-loving nations”; the United States and the West were warmongers, and first-strikers.

Several of the journalists present are concerned about Iran’s interference in Lebanon. There is not so great a concern about Iran’s stance toward Israel. In fact, one journalist sort of taunts Mottaki about the Summer ’06 war in Lebanon: Who was it that defeated the Israelis in the south? (The implied answer: Not Iran’s proxy, Hezbollah.) Mottaki dismisses the mere suggestion that Iran funds and arms Hezbollah; it is nothing but an “allegation,” he says. When he says it again, some of the journalists openly laugh at him. I have never seen this before at Davos.

On it goes. Before asking a question, we’re supposed to give our name and affiliation. One woman, addressing Mottaki, says that she is from Israel. The foreign minister refuses to take her question. So, another journalist offers to ask it for her. (It is a general, innocuous question about the Middle East peace process.) After about 45 minutes, we tumble back into the streets of Davos: to further coffees, to massages, to ski runs. Surreal, as I said. Davos can be like that, and so can the world, which this peculiar, annual jamboree reflects. **NR**

the bent pin

FLORENCE KING

She Changes In the End

THE trumpeted theme of Campaign ’08 reminds me of my grandmother’s interpretation of Lady Macbeth: “She’s having the Change.”

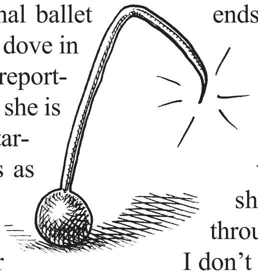
I have to remember to catch myself every time I start to say, “If I hear the word ‘change’ one more time . . .” The drumbeat is so incessant that I would have to go ahead and do whatever it is I threaten to do, and it might hurt. It might work, too: I’m on blood thinners.

I thought booze would help, but change, drunk or sober, is like my country, right or wrong: Nothing changes. Trying to drown our we-never-close politicking is like trying to drown a fish. Finally, I decided that the only escape is escapism, so I’m on a movie binge. Specifically, old movies, the kind they run in the middle of the night, the kind I watch over and over, the kind that helps me forget that everybody running for president is vowing to change the country as often and as drastically as AOL changes its welcome screen.

As one who is repelled by the upbeat futuristic visions voiced in the current debates, my favorite old-movie genre is “She Dies in the End.” Garbo in *Camille* always cheers me up because she manages to be tragic even when she’s laughing. Equally satisfying, her idealistic lover is played nice-boy dull by a young and mustache-free Robert Taylor, who comes across as the Adonis-next-door and who looks just like one of Mitt Romney’s beautiful interchangeable sons.

Garbo dies even better in the end of *Anna Karenina*, a movie I really needed after watching the official Romney spin delivered by Bay Buchanan, our half-full glass made flesh, who has never deviated from her bright-eyed, bushy-tailed, some-kinda-wonderful outlook on political life in the twenty or so years I have been watching her on TV. Having run out of ambitious brothers, she is now apparently chairing yet another in her long list of ad hoc projects. If she wants to shill for Romney that’s fine with me, as long as it keeps her from drifting into publishing, because she is so prone to hysterical optimism that had she been the editor on *Anna Karenina* she would have said: “Leo, please, take out the train.”

The saddest She Dies in the End is 1940’s *Waterloo Bridge*. Values voters never had it so good as it gets here. Vivien Leigh goes from virginal ballet dancer in a white tutu to soiled dove in sleazy satin after her fiancé is reported killed in WWI. Jobless after she is fired from the ballet, facing starvation, she takes to the streets as the only work available, just to discover, too late, that her fiancé wasn’t killed after all: It was a bureaucratic snafu in the casualty lists. She spots him as he steps off the train while she saunters into Waterloo Station to start her nightly rounds.



How he misses the change in her appearance is never explained, but the movie was based on Robert Sherwood’s play in which the girl was a prostitute all along, and a lot of clumsy edits had to be made to get the film past the production code. Values voters don’t care about such details as long as She Dies in the End, which she does by throwing herself under the wheels of a truck, but New Change advocates are harder to please. At the point where Vivien starts turning tricks, I foresaw some change freak writing a report citing women’s increased employment opportunities as tram conductors, mail carriers, trash collectors, etc. in WWI London, and charging *Waterloo Bridge* with deliberately ignoring the facts and sending women the message that prostitution is their only option. Bring on the pressure groups and it won’t be long before politically incorrect old movies—i.e., most old movies—vanish from TV, because the most rabid New Changers are some of the same people who have been after old movies for years.

Hillary Clinton is definitely a rabid New Changer but I’ll bet you anything she paid careful attention to a certain old movie, because she quoted from it—or tried to. It happened during a question period when someone referred to illegal women immigrants and Hillary shot back, “No woman is illegal!” This was her tin-ear version of Greer Garson’s famous line in *Blossoms in the Dust*, the 1941 biopic about Edna Gladney, who successfully campaigned to remove the word “illegitimate” from Texas birth certificates. In the climactic scene in the state legislature, a plangent Garson is irresistible as she appeals to the assembled good ole boys in a speech that ends: “There are no illegitimate children! Only illegitimate parents!”

It was a landmark in screen history but Hillary is tone deaf and arrhythmic, so she said it the way it came through to her.

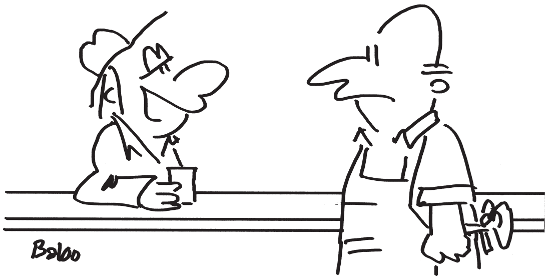
I don’t know if Obama watches old movies, but there is one he will rue if certain opponents of his get inspired by it. It’s one that you would least expect to contain anything that creators of attack ads and vicious parodies would find useful, because it’s a Fred Astaire–Ginger Rogers vehicle, *The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle*, the early 20th-century dance team. When the story opens, Ginger’s character, who thinks she would rather be a singer than a dancer, sings a hit song of 1908, “The Yama Yama Man.” It has nothing to do with race; it’s about a bogeyman who scares children and it goes like this:

> Maybe he’s hiding behind the chair,
> Ready to spring out at you, unaware;
> You’d better run to your mama, for
> here comes the Yama,
> The Yama Yama man.

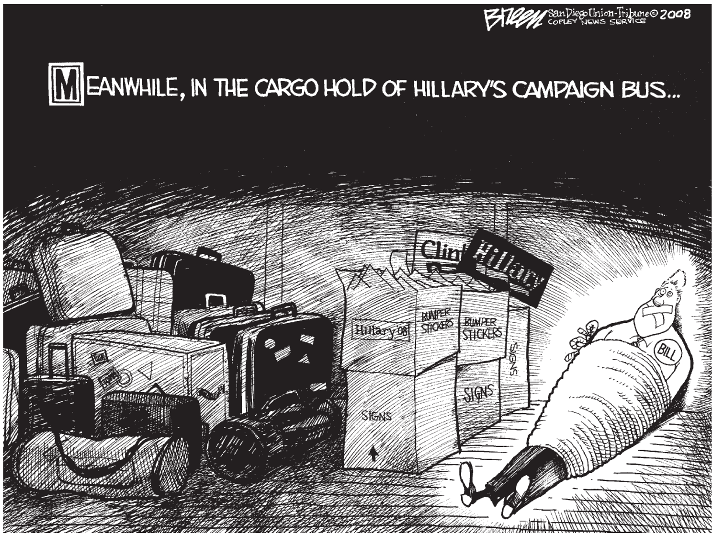
Unless this is transposed for saxophone and flat contralto profundo, Obama is safe because he is a saint in all his old movies: *To Obama, with Love*; *They Call Me MISTER Obama*; and *Guess Who’s Running against Hillary?* **NR**

Florence King can be reached at P.O. Box 7113, Fredericksburg, VA 22404.

HELP!!!!



"Well, I'd better be getting home, Joe—breakfast is the most important meal of the day."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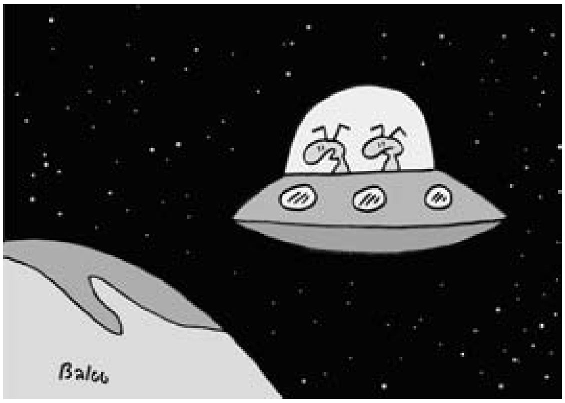
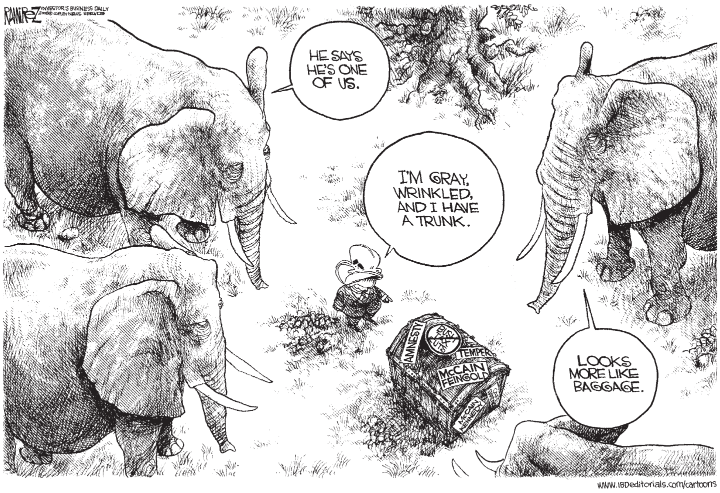


"It's hard to decide—Hillary would give us driver's licenses, but McCain promises a path to citizenship."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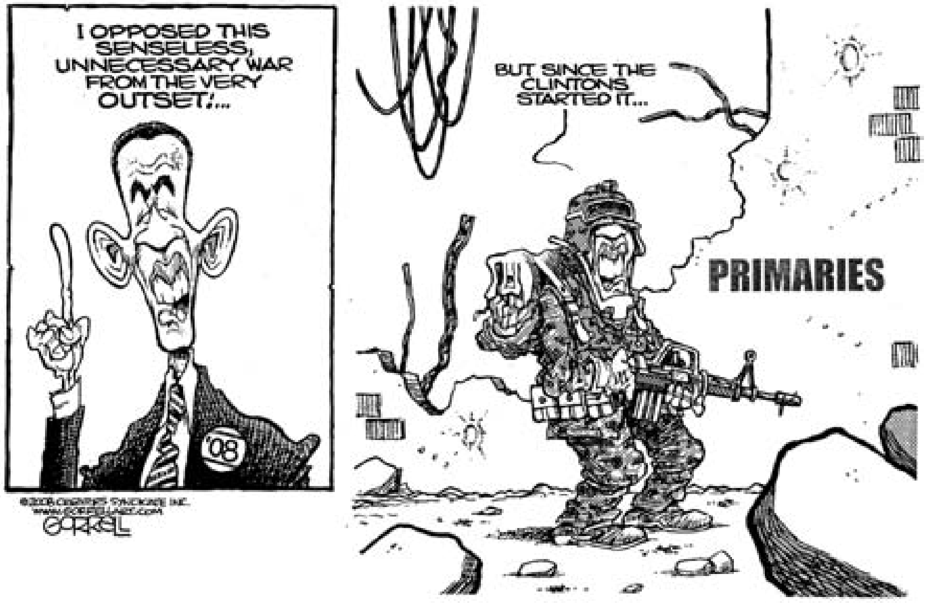
I OPPOSED THIS SENSELESS, UNNECESSARY WAR FROM THE VERY OUTSET!...
'08
BUT SINCE THE CLINTONS STARTED IT...
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GORRELL

the long view

ROB LONG

Transcript from *Larry King Live* February 4, 2009

LARRY KING: “From Rawlins, Wyoming! Hello!”

CALLER: “Hi, Larry. I’d like to ask your guest if she intends to keep her maiden name.”

LARRY KING: “Good question. Your name. You’ve been back and forth on it. What’s gonna be the deal?”

HILLARY CLINTON: “Well, Larry, I’ve always been Hillary Rodham, and then when I was married to Bill, I was Hillary Rodham Clinton, and then of course with all of those forms and so forth—”

LARRY KING: “Legalese! It’s killing us!”

HILLARY CLINTON: “Right, right. So it was easier to just keep it simple. Hillary Clinton.”

LARRY KING: “But Bill’s been dead for . . . what? Nine months?”

HILLARY CLINTON: “Eleven. And two weeks. And three days.”

LARRY KING: “And so now the healing starts.”

HILLARY CLINTON: “And sixteen minutes.”

LARRY KING: “From Stevens Creek, California! Hello!”

CALLER: “Hi, Larry, hi Mrs. Clinton. I want to know if you have any regrets about the way the campaign ended up last year. And if you still have plans to run again?”

LARRY KING: “What about it? Tough year. Obama. Then the thing with Bill. The . . . heart attack? Was it a heart attack? The ticker just went pop? Been there, folks! Been there, felt that!”

HILLARY CLINTON: “Honestly, Larry, we don’t really know. We’re trying to get to the bottom of it, but the Chappaqua medical examiner’s office has been less than forthcoming. As near as I can tell—and remember, I was in the middle of a pretty intense presidential campaign at the time—he had a heart attack, fell down the stairs, and that was that.”

LARRY KING: “I know he had a history of heart disease. But the cause of death was ruled as ‘poison.’”

HILLARY CLINTON: “That’s correct, Larry. Apparently, he fell down the stairs onto an open bottle of poison, somehow ingested a large amount . . .”

LARRY KING: “Amazing. And I’ve had heart attacks, friends, so I know they can be disorientating.”

HILLARY CLINTON: “It was a tragedy, Larry. Of course, I was devastated. What we shared . . . well, it was a very special thing. It’s been hard to heal, of course. Very painful. But Bill would have wanted me to go on . . .”

LARRY KING: “Would you like a tissue?”

HILLARY CLINTON: “Thank you, Larry.”

LARRY KING: “From Rockport, Maine! Hello!”

CALLER: “Hi, Larry. Mrs. Clinton, I was wondering if you have any thoughts about the new McCain administration. Have you talked to him? And how do you think he’s doing?”

LARRY KING: “The one hundred days! Important stuff! Up! Down! Your thoughts!”

HILLARY CLINTON: “Well, as you know, Larry, I endorsed Senator McCain shortly after I left the race myself, due to the unfortunate events with Bill and so forth, and I’ve been pleased to see him moving forward on a lot of the issues that I talked about during my campaign—national health insurance, higher income taxes, that sort of thing—but even I have been surprised by some of his initiatives.”

LARRY KING: “The open borders?”

HILLARY CLINTON: “Not just opening them up. But the welcome barbeques, the logo tote bags, the free skin-care products, all of it.”

LARRY KING: “He’s taken it to a whole ’nother level!”

HILLARY CLINTON: “And nobody expected him to switch parties. Especially not to the Peace and Freedom party.”

LARRY KING: “He’s a maverick! He’s outside the box! From Detroit, Michigan! Hello!”

CALLER: “Hi, Mrs. Clinton. I was wondering if you have any plans to remarry?”

LARRY KING: “Great question! Well? Got the itch? Lemme be the first to say, marriage is great after sixty! The sex, even better than it was at fifty-five!”

HILLARY CLINTON: “Oh, this is all very premature.”

LARRY KING: “Is there a man in your life? Is there a guy for Hillary Clinton?”

HILLARY CLINTON: “You know, Larry, I just haven’t had a moment to think about that kind of thing. I’ve been focusing on healing, and the family, and the issues that I care about. And Bill’s death is so recent . . .”

LARRY KING: “Would he have wanted you to date?”

HILLARY CLINTON: “That’s a very complicated question, Larry.”

LARRY KING: “But he was a guy who understood something about physical needs, right? About the human desire for touch.”

HILLARY CLINTON: “Um . . .”

LARRY KING: “He wouldn’t have begrudged you, would he? You know who would be good for you? I keep thinking a Mort Zuckerman. A Ron Perelman.”

HILLARY CLINTON: “Aren’t both of those gentlemen married?”

LARRY KING: “I didn’t say get married to them! I said, go out, have a few drinks, have some laughs! Look at me! I’m a yenta all of a sudden!”

HILLARY CLINTON: “Honestly, Larry, I’m just looking forward to putting this all behind me, and then moving on.”

LARRY KING: “You’re talking about the inquest?”

HILLARY CLINTON: “Yes. It’s all so unnecessary. People just love to make things into these big conspiracies.”

LARRY KING: “They’re trying to explain the stab wounds?”

HILLARY CLINTON: “But they’re so easy to explain! Bill had a heart attack, then fell down the stairs onto a bottle of poison, ate some, then got up to call 9-1-1, and when reaching for the phone he mistakenly grabbed a knife from the counter, stabbed himself several times in the chest and neck and face and abdomen, raced to the garage, and collapsed in the trunk of the car. Why is that so hard to understand?”

LARRY KING: “Makes sense to me! Tomorrow night! The whole hour with Lorna Luft!”

O JAY, CAN YOU SEE?

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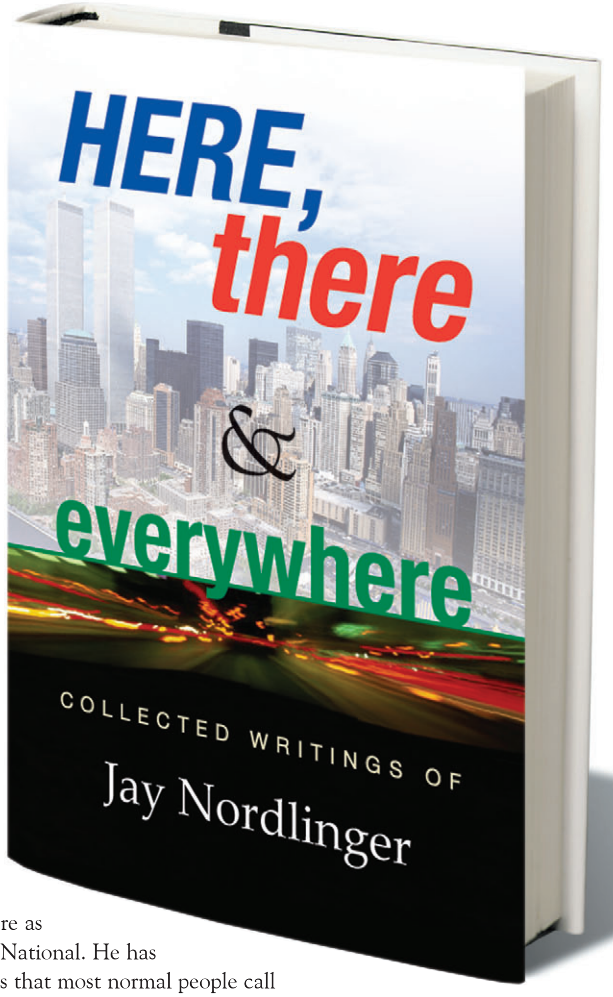

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Foiled Again?

MEGHAN COX GURDON

When I heard who had won this year’s Newbery Medal, which is to children’s literature what the Pulitzer is to journalism, I walked around humming. The Newbery is *the* great prize for children’s-book authors: Its gold-foil medallion on the cover of one’s book brings a measure of fame; but, more important, because schools routinely stock medalists in their libraries and use them in their curricula, it means an opportunity to shape the literary experience of rising generations.

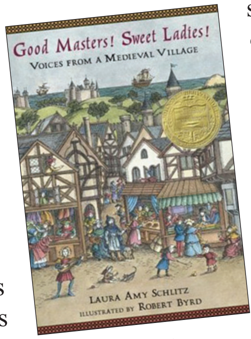
Too often, the medal has gone to books that, while not crudely didactic, nonetheless reflect a generally left-wing worldview. Innumerable Newberys sell the virtues of racial diversity and countercultural eccentricity, for instance, but in only a few do patriotism or religious faith figure prominently. I know children who flinch from the golden disk as from a spoonful of cod-liver oil.

Hence my delight when Laura Amy Schlitz won the 2008 Newbery Medal for *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village*, a wry, humane, and clever series of interwoven monologues and dialogues set in and around an English manor in 1255. Explaining the decision, Newbery judge Nina Lindsay said, “Each entry is superb in itself, and together the pieces create a pageant that transports readers to a different time and place.”

Critics of *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!* grumble that it’s more a worthy book for school libraries than a fizzy read for school-aged children. To my mind, that’s part of its greatness: In expecting the reader to meet it halfway, the book represents a turn away from the gauzy perishability of other recent Newbery medalists. Here is a work that is meaty, lively, and original—without a whiff of agenda-pushing or subversive age-inappropriateness. It is not a book just for now; it’s a book for good.

Entertaining as some other recent Newbery winners have been, it’s impossible to say the same of them. Remember the Great Scrotum Controversy of 2007? It erupted after Susan Patron won the medal for *The Higher Power of Lucky*, which begins with the ten-year-old heroine eavesdropping on an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. (The setting alone might make the novel indigestible for some parents.) The girl, Lucky, overhears a fellow telling how he’d been drinking rum and had fallen out of his car, “when he saw a rattlesnake on the passenger seat biting his dog, Roy, on the scrotum.”

A few pages on, the girl is still turning the mysterious word over in her mind: “Scrotum sounded to Lucky like something green that comes up when you have the flu and cough too much. It sounded medical and secret, but also important, and Lucky was glad she was a girl and would never have such an aspect as a scrotum to her own body.”


Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!
Voices from a Medieval Village
Laura Amy Schlitz
illustrated by Robert Byrd

A handful of librarians around the country decided that however redeeming the rest of the novel might be, they didn’t want to be the means of introducing the scrotum to fourth-graders, and chose not to purchase the book. This, for the highly strung, is what amounts to “censorship,” and, as you can imagine, there was a mighty wind on the Internet. Bloggers outdid one another in heaping scorn on the recalcitrant librarians, who must surely be dangerous reactionaries rather than, say, reasonable people hewing to a traditional sense of propriety. (Of course the Left, itself intolerant of divergent opinions, enjoys nothing more than feeling that civil society is under attack from the forces of retrograde censorship. I saw this in action at the American Library Association’s annual conference in Washington this past summer: Susan Patron was signing books, and it was amusing to see how earnestly she was congratulated for her bravery.)

For many people, especially parents, the scrotum kerfuffle confirmed a vague and gathering unease with the trend of children’s fiction generally. The Newbery imprimatur, for example, had once been a kind of visual shorthand for a “good” and suitable book for children. Somewhere along the line, this comfortable assumption disappeared. A while ago, NR’s own David Frum had fun tipping the idea on its head: “I have found the Newbery Award a very helpful guide,” he insisted cheerfully in his blog on NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE. “If not perverse, it will be vapid; if not politically correct, then it will be grimly didactic.” In the Frum household, he said, you will find no Newbery of more recent vintage than 1944’s *Johnny Tremain*.

That’s certainly one way to sort ’em. Sticking with pre-1950 medalists means you would indeed be safe among *The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle* (1923), *Caddie Woodlawn* (1936), and *Call It Courage* (1941), among many other excellent works. But you would miss—

We’ll get to that in a minute. It is true that after the picture-book stage it’s difficult to keep up with one’s children’s reading; at least I find it so. That male genitalia may now be lurking in fiction for elementary-schoolers increases the temptation to avoid all things modern, and makes a trip to the bookstore a delicate exercise. Sure you want them to read, but, ugh—*that?* I’ve lost count of the number of parents who, when they learn I review children’s books, groan about the awfulness of the new.

Oh, I tell them, I know. Since 2005, I’ve been reading almost nothing *but* kid lit, and great has been my gloom at much of what crosses my desk: a steady stream of trashy and transgressive books for teens, shallow kissy books for middle-schoolers, and insipid self-esteem boosters for the very young. Yet it would be unfair to conclude that contemporary children’s books are all rot; they aren’t. Amidst the darkness and triviality are a great many witty and stirring novels, glorious fantasies, and innumerable lovely picture books. In

Meghan Cox Gurdon is children’s-book critic for the *Wall Street Journal*.

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some respects, we are in a golden age: Never before have so many artists, writers, and publishers toiled to produce so much for the delight of America's young.

Alas, in too many children's books, as in the larger culture, families are wrecked and dysfunctional, fathers are more often absent than present, teenagers drink and sleep together and kill themselves, and homophobia has replaced racial prejudice as the darkest sin of all. Scanning the shelves for teenage readers, in particular, you would be forgiven for not knowing that the world is full of households whose members love one another, who stay married to one another, and who greet the future with optimism, not prescription painkillers.

Perhaps happiness has never made as compelling a story as misery, and adventure can occur only when there's risk and the possibility of loss; still, when you consider the beauty to which literature can introduce children, and the bleak grotesqueries to which many books actually do, it's clear that something is out of whack. Callousness, betrayal, and cruelty make for interesting tales—like the scrotum, they're part of life—but parents don't necessarily want children to dwell on them. It is not censorship that causes adults to withhold certain books from children; it is judgment—the same faculty that allows 15 book-industry insiders to sift through the colossal output of American publishing and pluck a single volume each year to receive the highest distinction.

It's not possible to sit in on Newbery deliberations—they're conducted in secret—but last summer at the librarians' convention I was able to see how the process works for the ALSC Children's Notables, another awards program that, like the Newbery, is conducted under the auspices of the ALA. (ALSC stands for Association for Library Service to Children.) In a bland conference room, eleven people sat around a table beside a projector screen that showed the book under discussion. Maybe two dozen auditors sat nearby; one young woman was crocheting. A single judge was male; of the ten others, nine wore their hair cut short. Everyone seemed concerned not to be overly, well, *judgmental*. "I'm not censoring or anything," one woman said gently, of a fictional incident, "but I found that [scene] very jarring."

A hotbed of librarianism, indeed! It was hard not to smirk. Conservatives have long mistrusted the ALA, a group that lobbies shrilly for the freedom of patrons to use library computers without stint or oversight, even when the users want to pull up pornography, or jihadi how-to sites, or both.

Yet at the same time, I felt a pang of camaraderie. Here were serious people talking about children's books and obviously caring as much about them as any bookish right-winger. As a reviewer myself, I know the special agony of literary triage. Furthermore, it's not just movement conservatives who complain about the Newberys. Writing in a recent issue of *Publishers Weekly*, children's-book reviewer Elizabeth Devereaux expressed disappointment with the un-fun nature of too many medalists: "Consider how often the Newbery winners are didactic or 'worthy': How many take up literacy, civil rights, or freedom of speech; how many Newbery-winning characters are inspiring or crusading teachers (or librarians); how many make a case for classics or poetry? How many of these books are 'good'—meaning good for you, as opposed to a good read?"

The first Newbery medalist was both: The award in 1922 went to *The Story of Mankind*, a work of nonfiction. In subsequent years, that high-mindedness generally dissipated. The 2006 medal went to *Criss Cross*, a novel about the inner lives of children on the cusp of adolescence. Here, as with *The Higher Power of Lucky*, the writing is light and often funny, but there's an impermanence about it that suggests a relatively short shelf life. In this it resembles many other books on the long list of Newbery winners.

But there's no clean cut-off date for when the books went bad. For every *Kira-Kira* (2005), about unionizing Japanese-American laborers in the 1950s, there's a droll and brilliantly structured story like *Holes* (1999), or a riveting anti-utopian exploration such as *The Giver* (1994). Going back a bit, you might wish to bypass the racial-tolerance lessons of *Maniac Magee* (1991), *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1977), or *M. C. Higgins, the Great* (1975); but you wouldn't want

Lucky fisherman "catches" $100,000,000 treasure lost for 209 years under the sea

DEI·GRATIA
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III·

A close-up view of a 1783 Silver Dollar recovered in the Gulf of Mexico by a commercial fisherman. These long-lost coins were part of the cargo of a Spanish warship that set sail for New Orleans in 1784. Experts value the treasure in excess of $100,000,000.

Vast shipwreck treasure sees light of day. It was sunrise on an August morning when a fisherman and his crew cast their nets from his trawling vessel some 50 miles south of Louisiana in the Gulf of Mexico. While trolling the depths, the net suddenly got caught and the captain could only dread the lost time and money that the damage would bring. As the tattered net emerged from the ocean depths, he spied what appeared to be clumps of rocks weighing it down.

As the net hovered slowly over the deck, the contents poured out followed by excited cries of "Coins! Coins!" The captain quickly realized they had snagged a fisherman's dream: sunken treasure! And not just any treasure, but early American silver dollars that had gone down 209 years earlier.

In 1784, at the end of the American Revolutionary War, a heavily armed ship was bound for the port of New Orleans. On board was a fortune in Spanish Silver Dollars. These dollars -were well known by Thomas Jefferson, Ben Franklin and other founding fathers of our nation. Hundreds of thousands of them were loaded for the trip to New Orleans, yet not a single one arrived.

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With no survivors from the ill-fated voyage, historians can only guess at what happened. Some say powerful storms took her down while others speculate it was treasure-hungry pirates. Whatever happened, the secret – along with a treasure valued near $100,000,000 in today's dollars – was sent to a watery grave some 300 feet below the ocean's surface.

America's first silver dollar. The favorite coin of colonial Americans, they were called "Spanish Milled Dollars". Widely used and accepted as payment in the thirteen colonies, the United States government accorded them status of official legal tender.

If the story of George Washington throwing a silver dollar across the Potomac River is indeed true, then doubtless it was a silver dollar like this one that made the trip.

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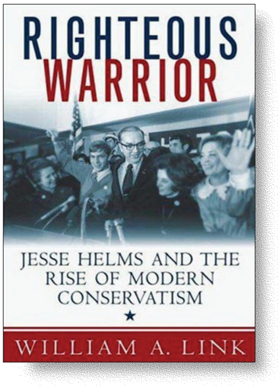
to miss *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (1968), *Ginger Pye* (1952), *A Wrinkle in Time* (1963)—actually, as a sixth-grader, I would happily have skipped that one, though now I see its virtues—or *Rabbit Hill* (1945).

What has changed more dramatically is the age at which certain ideas or words are thought appropriate, which is sadly in keeping with the larger culture. Children's authors today assume a more knowing child at a younger age, for there is an "aging up" process observable with books, as there is with toys and movies. This, I think, is what accounts for the appearance of "scrotum" in a book for children ages nine to eleven. It wouldn't have occurred to Laura Ingalls Wilder to name male genitalia, just as I doubt it would have occurred to WFB to include the word in an early issue of NATIONAL REVIEW. I believe Susan Patron when she says she didn't put the word in to shock or titillate. She is part of the zeitgeist, as I am; that word is one her heroine might have overheard, just as it's an indelicacy I find myself writing about.

Cultural change is not the fault of fiction; it is reflected by fiction. This change in children, this creeping jadedness, was clear a decade ago, as E. L. Konigsburg poignantly observed in *The View from Saturday* (Newbery Medalist in 1997). In the story, which among other things mocks the idea of taxpayer-funded diversity training, a teacher reflects on how students have altered: "Between the time she had started as an elementary school teacher and the time she had retired as a middle school principal, sixth grade had changed, but sixth graders had changed more. Sixth graders had stopped asking, 'Now what?' and had started asking 'So what?'"

When I started reading and rereading my way through the Newbery medalists six months ago (full disclosure: I didn't get *all* the way through), I thought it would be easy to discern a pattern of literary decay. It wasn't. The world of the Newbery turns out to be a lot like the real world: abounding in nonsense, yet rich with serious-mindedness; full of knaves, but also of heroes; characterized by heartbreak, but also by redemption and joy—and, like the real world, a shade more to the left than one would like. **NR**

Freedom Fighter



Righteous Warrior: Jesse Helms and the Rise of Modern Conservatism, by William A. Link (St. Martin's, 643 pp., $39.95)

JOHN HOOD

WHY does Jesse Helms matter? To North Carolinians, who elected Helms five times to the U.S. Senate and made him the state's most successful modern politician, that question makes no sense. Before his first Senate victory in 1972, Helms was a well-known television editorialist, news reporter, and local politician in the state capital of Raleigh. Helms was a constant presence on North Carolina's airwaves from the 1950s until he left the Senate in 2003. Tar Heels loved him or hated him, but rarely ignored him.

Outside the state, the precise nature of Helms's political significance is harder to pin down. Some point to the fact that his political organization pioneered modern campaign tactics such as direct mail and sharp-edged advertising. Others see Helms as a national leader in the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s, or a convenient foil for liberal activists, or a throwback to the days of segregation, or an accomplished master of the filibuster and parliamentary procedure in the Senate.

Mr. Hood is president of the John Locke Foundation, a public-policy think tank in North Carolina.

I think you can get a clearer picture of what made Helms unique—and how he came to be respected by millions both inside and outside his home state, often to their surprise—by considering the story of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's visit to the United States in 1975. Solzhenitsyn was a hero to Helms. After just one year of service in the Senate, Helms introduced a resolution to make Solzhenitsyn an honorary American citizen. It failed in the House. Then Helms helped to arrange a Washington visit for the exiled Soviet dissident the following year. At every turn, he faced obstruction by key figures in the Ford administration, led by secretary of state Henry Kissinger. When, thanks to the diligent work of Helms's staff, Solzhenitsyn was indeed brought to the country, Helms tried to set up a meeting for him with President Ford.

Not only was he rebuffed, but the State Department even forbade its employees to attend Solzhenitsyn's major speech (to the AFL-CIO). So what did the freshman senator from North Carolina do? He went to the floor of the Senate, called it a "sad day for our country," and accused Ford of "cowering timidity for fear of offending Communists." It was a public-relations disaster for the White House. Among the conservatives angered by the administration's parade of limp-noodle lickspittles was Ronald Reagan, who lambasted Ford in his newspaper column. Trying to rectify the situation, the White House approached Helms about a meeting with Solzhenitsyn, but refused to issue a written invitation for fear of supplying tangible evidence of caving in. Lacking such an invitation, Solzhenitsyn refused.

The Solzhenitsyn episode and many other compelling stories are related with competence, if not eloquence, in *Righteous Warrior*, a lengthy new biography of Helms by William A. Link. The author, a longtime university professor in North Carolina and now a historian at the University of Florida, is a standard-issue academic with the usual political allegiances (he's a member of Historians for Obama, among other leading ideological indicators). But, as has become standard practice in the overwhelmingly liberal field of political biography, Link begins *Righteous Warrior* with the promise to look beyond the conservative's public persona and the author's own politics to "judge [Helms] on his own terms." While sometimes such endeavors lead to real insights into key conservative political figures, they more often devolve into something like this: "His policies were disastrous, his principles were odious, and his political career lurched back and forth between fecklessness and villainy—but in private life he never, ever kicked his dog."

Indeed, Helms never kicked his dog. As Link dutifully reports, Helms was considered by congressional staffers to be among the nicest senators. He was known for his personal courtesy and wry wit. "Helms was especially kind to children," Link writes: Helms and his wife adopted a boy with cerebral palsy after reading a newspaper article about how difficult it was to place such children. Later in life, he befriended the rock star Bono and even famously attended a U2 concert in 2001. It was the "loudest thing I ever heard," Helms later said, admitting that "I couldn't really understand what he was saying." (How cute it was that the senator thought the lyrics mattered.)

Establishing that Helms was, indeed, a human being, Link and many of his sources then proceed throughout much of the book to wonder how in the world one could possibly square Helms the man with Helms the public figure. How can someone perform acts of personal kindness toward needy children, foreign dissidents, unknown constituents, and Washington tourists and yet oppose government welfare programs? How can someone espouse the cause of freedom and yet criticize the civil-rights movement?

Ultimately, Link fails to resolve his dilemma because he never seriously explores his subject's ideas—which, in any biography of an ideological figure, is hard to fathom. To those who understand the philosophy of limited government, it isn't at all puzzling that a conservative politician who is generous with his own time and money could simultaneously oppose coercive measures to redistribute income through a centralized, impersonal welfare state. Link portrays Helms's opposition to civil-rights legislation, forced busing, taxpayer funding of obscenity, and Communist dictators as more political posture or campaign code than substantive argument or constitutional principle. For example, when in 1960 Helms criticized the sit-in movement that began at a lunch counter in Greensboro, he based his argument on a defense of the property rights of restaurant owners to choose whom they wished to serve. Link writes that in editorializing this way Helms "fundamentally misunderstood" what the civil-rights protesters were trying to accomplish, but his discussion makes it quite clear that Link fundamentally misunderstands the argument Helms was employing. Rather than simply being a coded message to racists, the property-rights argument sounded sensible to millions of Americans outside the South, including future presidential candidate Barry Goldwater, hardly a crypto-segregationist. Link seems to think Helms was critiquing civil disobedience, including trespass, as a *means* of effecting social change. In reality, Helms was challenging one of the legislative *ends* of the movement—laws prohibiting individuals from exercising authority over the use of their private residential or commercial property.

If he had taken conservative ideas about rights and freedom more seriously, Link might well have offered a more thoughtful and effective criticism of Helms's role in the civil-rights debate: that by mixing a defense of property rights with less-savory references to "Negro agitators," out-of-state provocateurs, and Martin Luther King's subversive friends, Helms and other Southern commentators ended up weakening the very limited-government principles they espoused, with unfortunate and lasting consequences for American liberty. To make a truly persuasive libertarian case against federal regulation of private business decisions, it would have been necessary to marry every criticism of government overreaching with calls for the South's social and moral transformation and clear denunciations of racist business owners. Given that the segregation syndrome was largely the work of decades of intrusive laws and electoral abuses by state and local govern-

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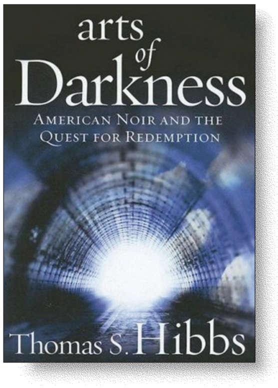
ments, there was at least a plausible conservative case to be made not just for federal intervention, but also for antidiscrimination laws to dismantle white supremacy and remedy the social and economic consequences of past state coercion.

Like many of his generation, Helms failed the test of the civil-rights era. Yet that doesn't invalidate his subsequent defense of liberty and opposition to statism, both at home and abroad. Rather than delve into these ideas in detail and disentangle the complexities, Link chooses to become a mind-reader: Dozens of times throughout the text, he asserts what Helms "must" have been thinking or planning, rather than letting the senator's voluminous writings and public statements speak for themselves. Furthermore, Link almost always seeks to interpret the controversial events of Helms's life in ways that put his subject in the worst possible light. This leads Link into some fairly obvious traps, such as pretending that North Carolina's infamous Soul City project was anything other than the scandalously wasteful boondoggle Helms always said it was, and treating the comments of estranged political consultant Carter Wrenn as authoritative when they seem to discredit Helms but not when they exonerate him.

Despite these flaws, those unfamiliar with the fascinating career of Jesse Helms could do a lot worse than read *Righteous Warrior*. The campaign sections are based largely on contemporaneous media accounts and offer a pretty good taste of what these political food fights were like. But the book must be read skeptically. It's worth remembering that, on the issues Helms got wrong, he had no lasting effect on American public policy. But on the issues he got right—the Cold War, excessive government, personal responsibility, the benefits of expanding capitalism at home and abroad, and the need to reform entitlements and the tax code—Helms, caricatured as a political dinosaur, was ahead of his time, and often successful. He helped chart the course that America must follow if it is to preserve its liberty and its exceptional place in the history of nations. **NR**

Showing The Scars



Arts of Darkness: American Noir and the Quest for Redemption, by Thomas S. Hibbs (Spence, 336 pp., $27.95)

S. T. KARNICK

ONCE the Sixties generation began its Long March through the institutions, conservatives started to despair of ever being able to counter what they saw as the uniform degradation of American culture. In the past couple of decades, however, more and more critics on the right have looked past the surfaces of seemingly antinomian and relativistic popular art and found serious and often positive meanings in it. One such writer is Thomas Hibbs, a Baylor University professor of ethics and culture, film critic for NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE, and author of *Shows About Nothing*, a 1999 study in which he found Nietzscheanism to be rampant in American pop culture. In *Arts of Darkness*, Hibbs examines the distinctively American popular art form known as noir.

The term "noir" was first applied to a group of taut, tense, and often bleak crime films of the 1940s. Movies such as *The Maltese Falcon*, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, *Out of the Past*, and *The Killers* merged arty techniques derived from German Expressionism with conventional, gritty, strongly American story lines stemming from the hardboiled detective novels of the 1930s. The films featured astonishingly cynical characters, commonly motivated by greed, sexual desire, envy, revenge, and other generally unwholesome impulses. American society, in these films, is consistently corrupt under a façade of respectability: People in power routinely exploit others simply to gain more power, and protagonists become increasingly enmeshed in a trap they cannot escape. A sense of dread and fatalism is omnipresent.

These movies brought a new level of cynicism to American popular culture, reflecting a society jaded by a long economic depression and horrific war. Since their era, as a result, "noir" has come to describe not a genre or style but really an attitude, even a philosophy: a perspective that has persisted in American culture in a variety of media and genres. (Although Hibbs does not mention it, there was a long tradition of "dark" fiction in American literature before the 1940s—e.g., Melville's *The Confidence-Man* and *Moby-Dick*, Mark Twain's later works, Hawthorne's novels and stories.)

Hibbs writes that, although noir seems bleak and cynical on the surface, the meaning behind the phenomenon is a good deal more complex and significantly more positive: "What is significant about these films is not just that they present a dark and dismal world but that they display their main characters as on a quest for love, truth, justice, and even redemption." What interests Hibbs is "the convergence of noir with the religious quest": Noir arises from the same impulses that prompted Pascal to write of the hiddenness of God, and of the faithful believer who seeks "with groans."

Hibbs sees noir as engaging and critiquing the two major philosophical dangers of modernity: nihilism and Gnosticism. He writes: "Enlightenment theorists promise liberation from various types of external authority: familial, religious, and political. But an unintended consequence of the implementation of Enlightenment theories is the elimination of freedom." The film noir vividly expresses this truth, as the protagonists find themselves ever more deeply enmeshed in the complex, bureaucratized, soulless modern cities and webs of uncaring institutions that are the consequence of

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Mr. Karnick maintains the website The American Culture, www.STKarnick.com.

the Enlightenment passion for controlling the world through science. In portraying the tragic limitations of the Enlightenment project, Hibbs argues, noir shows liberal modernity as "a potential source of nihilism, a human existence devoid of any ultimate purpose or fundamental meaning, where the great tasks of inquiry and the animating quests that inspired humanity in previous ages cease to register in the human soul," a place where the very notion of a soul is suspect.

Classic film noir demonstrates a conservative respect for the limits of human aspiration and warns of 'the dangers of transgressing boundaries.'

The problem of the soul, Hibbs notes, is a central concern of sci-fi noir, a subgenre that includes some of the most popular films of the past quarter century: the *Terminator* series, *Blade Runner*, *Dark City*, *Minority Report*, and the *Matrix* series. These films often center on the difficulty of knowing whether an entity is a human or a machine, and flirt with the mechanistic notion that human beings are nothing more than material objects, and thus lack free will.

Hibbs faults sci-fi noir for evincing a Gnostic desire to escape the limitations of the body, but the films actually fit his overall thesis better than he realizes. For example, the goal of the central characters in the *Matrix* series—which he criticizes as Gnostic—is to free people's bodies from the alternative-reality Matrix, where they are used as power sources for machines. Given that the trapped individuals experience a reality all but indistinguishable from physical reality, there is no reason to free them other than to allow them to use their bodies and thus be complete human beings. (In addition, the *Matrix* trilogy is, like most sci-fi noir, suffused with Christian imagery—suggesting the real alternative to nihilism and Gnosticism.)

Hibbs writes that the TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* "depicts its characters struggling to recover a lost code of good and evil and longing for a kind of redemption." Like classic film noir, *Buffy* demonstrates a conservative respect for the limits of human aspiration and warns of "the dangers of transgressing boundaries"; it "repeatedly affirms a clear structure to the cosmos, a sense of boundaries that cannot be crossed without dire consequences."

Some neo-noir films, Hibbs argues, have a different agenda: the "elevation of the anti-hero who stands beyond good and evil." He points to Nietzschean supermen such as the shadowy crime lord in *The Usual Suspects*, and claims that the power of these super-antiheroes "effectively makes the existence of a loving God irrelevant to human life" and thus makes the films fully nihilistic. But Hibbs notes the philosophical impossibility of absolute evil, and the fact that evil is parasitic upon good and points us toward it. Noir, Hibbs writes, "jar[s] us into realizations about how disordered our condition is; it brings us face to face with ourselves and our wretched alienation." Paradoxically, by identifying the danger of nihilism, noir helps us avoid it: "However much noir may flirt with or engage the possibility of nihilism, it typically resists succumbing to it. Noir persists in depicting the human longing for love, for truth, and for communication as noble and admirable, as constitutive of what it means to be human."

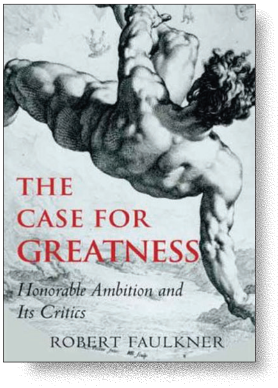
That is the enduring power of noir. It shows us the abyss—and reminds us that we can still turn back. **NR**

RECEPTION

You knew *exactly* who it was: that unknown
guest, impeccably dressed, and slick as ice.
It stood, beneath the Böcklin, all alone,
staring in your direction, not once, but twice.
Frozen, in panic, overcome with deep
disgust, you know that you're the helpless "prey,"
you know that you'd do anything to keep
this useless little life you've wasted away.
It walks across the room, looks in your eye,
then turns to face your date, kissing her cheek.
She smiles, while you say nothing, not even good-bye.
She's just some pretty face you met last week.
They talk—it's all exceedingly polite—
as they walk away together into the night.

—WILLIAM BAER

It Has Its Place



The Case for Greatness: Honorable Ambition and Its Critics, by Robert Faulkner (Yale, 264 pp., $30)

BRIAN C. ANDERSON

POLITICAL ambition has a bad reputation these days. Not least because the "professional politician" tends to wear out his welcome quickly: Our historically unprecedented media sensorium, with its unceasing coverage and analysis, its exposés and lightning bolts of enthusi-

Mr. Anderson is editor of ***City Journal*** *and author of* ***Democratic Capitalism and Its Discontents*** *and* ***South Park Conservatives.***

asm, makes it hard for any political actor to sustain popular admiration. That's probably a good thing, on balance, for free government. But political ambition still exists (just think about all the presidential debates we've endured over the last several months). And, as Robert Faulkner argues in this wise book, the honorable kind—that of a Washington, Churchill, or Reagan—can achieve greatness by founding, protecting, or revitalizing "decent" societies.

Modern thought is inhospitable to honorable ambition, as Faulkner shows. Consider two main currents of political theory. In the egalitarian philosophy of justice of John Rawls and his followers, both honor and ambition belong to an unlamented, unfair past. Nothing beyond the individual's control should dampen his life prospects, whether it's a hardscrabble or abusive upbringing, skin color or sex, or the lack of such genetic gifts as good looks and talent. Even the capacity to work hard or to act responsibly is a product of our circumstances, say the Rawlsians, and therefore irrelevant to justice. Society must fix itself so that the "lucky" permanently—and massively—subsidize the "unlucky" and never benefit "unfairly" from their advantages. Where does grand political ambition, honorable or not, find a home in this bleak world? Small wonder, writes Faulkner, that the indices of Rawls's major books "contain no references to ambition, honor, or greatness, or to leadership, founders, or framers."

Then you've got ambition-loving Friedrich Nietzsche, whose contemporary academic admirers are legion (an odd fact, given his hatred of equality and democracy). Nietzsche would have despised liberals like Rawls for snuffing out greatness with a "slave morality." But Nietzsche's emphasis on the will—"unbridled," as Faulkner puts it, from ethical constraints—conjures something worse: a master morality of "men of prey," political supermen who will view "equal dignity" and kindred liberal notions as bad jokes.

Nietzsche made greatness "so repulsive," writes Faulkner, "that decent people, and anyone devoted to a free country, harbor understandable suspicions." Neither denouncing ambition nor liberating it from what is honorable helps us to see how democratic politics can benefit from ambition—and avoid its excesses. Marxist and other deterministic theories are equally unsatisfactory, Faulkner maintains: If politics is the epiphenomenon of vast, hidden economic or historical forces, then how could the ambitious be anything more than puppets, lacking true agency?

One of Nietzsche's heroes was the Greek general and politician Alcibiades, whose volcanic ambition and unusual talents agitated Athenian democracy. Faulkner rightly notes that Alcibiades attracted "observers of the highest capacities," including Plato and Thucydides. For Faulkner, their assessments—as well as classical thought in general—offer a richer understanding of political ambition than anything found in Rawls, Nietzsche, or Marx.

Chronicling Alcibiades' notorious career, Faulkner follows Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War. In 415 B.C., Alcibiades spurred Athens to undertake the notorious Sicilian expedition, which ended in ruin for the democracy, though scholars argue that if Alcibiades himself—and not fearful Nicias—had been in charge, the outcome might have been different. Then, three years later, facing charges of impiety trumped up by his political foes back home, he switched allegiances to Sparta, Athens's dread enemy. Alcibiades went so far as to run military campaigns against his former home. Sparta, too, grew tired of this adventurer, and he then fled to Persia, where he advised the satrap for a time. He would return to Athens, but his enemies eventually drove him from the city for good.

In Alcibiades' exploits, "one sees grand ambition writ large in imperialism, civil strife, and even treason," Faulkner explains. This seems to represent Nietzsche's amoral, selfish striving, however dazzling the daring and genius. But the complete picture was more complex. Alcibiades' ambition also included restraint, brilliant and necessary policies, justice, nobility, even a kind of patriotism; a moral and political order still inhibited and shaped it. Plato's two dialogues bearing the name *Alcibiades* examine this complexity in the light of the Platonic understanding of the soul. Socrates' charged cross-examination tempered the behavior of a potential tyrant, though obviously with only some success. Xenophon's portrayal of the Persian ruler Cyrus reveals what happens when the desire for greatness triumphs over any concern for goodness, argues Faulkner: despotism and conquering "without end." Cyrus knew how to succeed—his empire eventually encompassed much of Southwest Asia and Central Asia. But for what? Cyrus "did not know what was best to succeed at," Faulkner says.

The most reliable guide to honorable ambition is Aristotle. The *Nicomachean Ethics* establishes Aristotle's model: the magnanimous man, or "gentleman statesman," who seeks (in Faulkner's words) "not only the esteem of his fellowmen, but also to be worthy of their esteem" by being principled and just. He is great *and* good. Aristotle's later *Politics* makes clear the need to subordinate the talented, ambitious individual to the laws and rules of his country. No figure exemplifies the Aristotelian ideal better, Faulkner believes, than George Washington, who burned with ambition, but—unlike Cyrus or Alcibiades—made it "serve justice, honor, and duty." Faulkner's passages on Washington are among his book's most incisive: "Whereas Thucydides' Alcibiades ranges beyond his country's laws and limits toward glorious victories and empires, Washington defended his democratic republic, accepted its limitations, and framed and settled its fundamental laws."

The Case for Greatness isn't easy going. Faulkner's penetrating analyses and close readings of classic texts presume familiarity with the source material; his terse style can be hermetic. But the book will reward the patient reader. In an election season in which empty, naked ambition gets closer and closer to the White House—do we really want the Clinton psychodrama as part of our daily lives again?—we are reminded how important honorable political ambition, and greatness, are to free societies. We may need them again, soon. **NR**

■ FILM ■

Shut up and Campaign

ROSS DOUTHAT

One of the more interesting recent exchanges between a filmmaker and a fan took place on the movie-geek website Ain't It Cool News, just before the release of *Rambo*, the sixtysomething Sylvester Stallone's second consecutive revival of a character he made famous a quarter century back. (The first was 2006's *Rocky Balboa*, in which the ex-champ tore up his AARP membership and allowed himself to be coaxed back into the ring one . . . last . . . time.) Not every movie star would stoop to an online Q&A with the unwashed, pseudonymous masses, but Stallone has mellowed into an appealingly self-aware and self-deprecating icon; moreover, he's the sort of canny self-promoter who knows *exactly* where to find the sort of fanboy who would thrill to the idea of a Rambo revival.

Which is how he ended up encountering one "Dr. Michael Hfuhruhurr" of Los Angeles, who posed a question that the hosts of *Entertainment Tonight* would never think to ask. In response to the news that the back-in-action Rambo would be taking sides in the Burmese civil war, the good doctor pointed out that "in the Eighties, John Rambo took on . . . the real villains of the day: ruthless, invading Russian commie bastards hellbent on global communism," and went on to wonder why the Rambo of the Oughts isn't "taking on the real villain of this day: extreme, radical Islamist bastards hellbent on worldwide jihad." Noting, more or less correctly, that "all of today's movies have [chickened] out on making Islamofascists the bad guys," Dr. Hfuhruhurr demanded to know if Rambo, in his dotage, had gone soft—or, worse, politically correct.

To which Stallone replied: "I thought the idea of Rambo dealing with al-Qaeda, etc., would be an insult to our American forces that are actually dying trying to rid the world of this cancer. To have at the end of a 90-minute movie the character of Rambo seizing Osama bin Laden in a choke hold then dragging him into the Oval Office then tossing him in the President's lap declaring 'The world is now safe, Chief' would be a bit insulting."

Not exactly the sort of answer you'd expect from George Clooney or Sean Penn, to say the least. But you could still regard it as something of a cop-out. After all, when we last laid eyes on John Rambo, in 1988's *Rambo: Part III*, he was taking the mujaheddin's side against the Soviets; who better, then, to head back to Afghanistan to clean up the mess we left behind?

Or rather, you could regard it as a cop-out until you actually sat down to watch the 90-minute movie in question, which never breathes the words "bin Laden" or "Islamism" or "Iraq" but is nonetheless the most hawkish, Bush-friendly slice of cinema you're likely to encounter at the multiplex this year. In a perceptive essay, the critic Matt Zoller Seitz called it a "Stay the Course movie . . . a pro-interventionist rebuttal to all the 2007 documentaries and dramas about America losing bits of its soul in Iraq." I call it *Why We Are in Mesopotamia*—or, with apologies to Robert Redford, *Lambs Need Lions*.

LIONSGATE

The lambs in question are the Karen, a tribe (many of whom are Christian) in the Burmese hinterland who are being systematically brutalized by the central government. (Think the Kurds or Shiites in Saddam's Iraq.) The wolves are the Burmese army (think the Republican Guard), a gang of self-satisfied savages with a taste for wanton cruelty; their leader is a mustachioed, chain-smoking pederast who combines all the finer qualities of the Husseins, father and sons. And the lion, of course, is Rambo himself, who after his Reagan-era exertions has settled into temporary retirement in the Thai river country (think America's 1990s holiday from history), where he catches snakes, goes fishing with a bow and arrow, and broods about how "you can't change what is."

That last quotation is his rebuttal to Sarah (Julie Benz), a guileless, blonde-haired Christian missionary who wants Rambo to take her gaggle of do-gooders upriver into Burma to deliver medical supplies to the long-suffering Karen. Rambo's philosophizing proves somewhat less than prophetic: Once our hero gets persuaded, like many a reluctant American before him, to pick a side and fight for it, he ends up not only saving the missionaries from the tender mercies of the South Asian Saddam, but wiping out half the Burmese army along the way. (There's even a makeshift "coalition of the willing" for Rambo to rally for the fight—a pan-ethnic group of mercenaries who gripe and whinge and keep trying to back out of the mission but end up pulling through, heroically, when the chips are finally down.) More prescient, though, is his response to the news that the Christians haven't brought any weapons with them on their interventionist mission. "Then you ain't changing anything," Rambo growls, and subsequent events bear him out. The do-gooders have the right idea, but their dream of a better world requires a Vietnam vet with a machete and a machine gun to back it up.

If this description makes you want to hustle out and a buy a ticket, though, I'd suggest that you reconsider. Whatever you think of Stallone's politics, this is an essentially repellent film. Not because of its message or its plot, but because it justifies the former, and pads the latter, by lingering (and lingering, and lingering) over footage of atrocities—disembowelments and gang rapes, severed limbs and exploding bodies—that would make Hieronymus Bosch go queasy. There's a fine, stripped-down, rah-rah action movie lurking inside *Rambo*, but you can barely make it out through all the gore. And somewhere between the moment when our hero rips one bad guy's throat out with his bare hands and the scene where he spills another's guts across the jungle floor, I realized that Stallone has pulled off the near-impossible: He's demonstrated that a right-wing, pro-American movie can be just as grisly and repellent as anything Brian De Palma has dreamed up.

The same week *Rambo* hit theaters, Stallone made another pro-war, pro-Surge gesture: He endorsed John McCain for president. The movie/endorsement one-two punch was the rarest of rare cases—a moment when a Hollywood star should have confined himself to dabbling in politics, and left the filmmaking to someone else. **NR**

COUNTRY LIFE

Ghosts On the Road

RICHARD BROOKHISER

In the winter I have a clear view through the bare trees of my dirt driveway, all the way to the road. Hardly any strange cars come down it except those of Jehovah's Witnesses, so when one appeared I went out the door wondering whom I would meet. The driver said he lived up the road (it's a long road), and heard that I wrote about the area. "Sometimes," I said somewhat encouragingly. "Well, here's a book about this road." How can you refuse a book about the road you live on? We chatted, I thanked him, then I looked at my gift.

The book was a memoir, self-printed in a ring binder 20 years ago. The author was not my neighbor, but another man; Google does not reveal whether he is alive, though, based on internal evidence, he might still be. The author's family moved to what is now my road just after World War I, and ran a summer boarding house for city dwellers out of their farmhouse. I have been in that very house; we stopped there once for a yard sale, and my wife discovered that a former student of hers now lived in it. It had a big floorplan, as if porches had been walled in, and lots of rooms on the second storey. Whatever fields had been farmed there were long overgrown.

The memoir dealt less with the author's thoughts and feelings than with his views of the doings of those larger and older than himself. The boarders on his family's farm kept busy, it seems. What happened in the country stayed in the country, so long as it was intramural (bachelors and wives hooking up while husbands were in the city working). Scandal arose only when unmarried city girls met local boys at barn dances. The author remembered one mother who had two daughters. The younger was the pretty one, but the mother tried to keep her in a holding pattern until the elder was married. It didn't work; at the end of the summer, the younger daughter confessed to having missed her period. But all was not lost, for her lover's father (a hotel owner from town, several miles down the road) appeared at the farm to declare what his son had done. Hard bargaining ensued: The mother threatened a charge of rape; the father replied that no one would believe an accusation made three weeks after the fact. The parents finally agreed that the couple would be married, though no one consulted them. The author added that the marriage lasted for about a year and a half.

Dead people are all around us. We go to the country looking for woodpeckers and Orion, and we find them, but every acre is marked with footprints.

The shotgun marriage is presented as low comedy, though it must not have been funny to the principals. Not funny at all is another feature of the book—the Ku Klux Klan. This was the '20s Klan, whose enemies were Catholics and Jews as much as blacks, and according to the author, it was a force to be reckoned with. He ended his memoir with an account of a rumble in town between the Klan and the builders of the first synagogue. When the Klansmen were worsted, the crowd that had gathered to watch the fight cheered the Jews (it sounds like a primary). The synagogue is still there, in the vernacular style of upstate: white wood, just like the older churches, but with a Star of David on top instead of a steeple. One of my friends, born and raised in the area, confirms that there were cross-burnings on the other side of the ridge, aimed at Sicilians. He believes that, after World War II, the local VFW posts, and the spirit of the war itself, put the kibosh on that; those clichéd multiethnic platoons of war movies reflected a new national reality.

The book that reveals the past is itself a cliché of the cheesy entertainments that we now call genre. Characters in H. P. Lovecraft are always running across copies of the *Necronomicon*, which explains how flesh-eating monsters from other worlds came to infest ours. But the oracular book is a convention of other narratives too. Joseph Smith discovered the pre-history of America in the Book of Mormon; Leo Strauss found the key to Plato in al-Farabi (there is always truth in the middle). Cervantes says he found the story of Don Quixote in a book by an Arab named Benengeli (eggplant).

How reliable was my book? In the battle of the synagogue, one Jewish guy beats five Klansmen. He is armed with the handle of a crank-started car, but the five Klansmen are armed with axe handles. It is possible that the victor was a second Samson, but it is also possible that the story had not gotten worse over time. The story of the young lovers has the ring of truth, if only because eros can look funny to outsiders. We should remember, as we peep, what it feels like in the funnel of the tornado.

When the boy in the Bruce Willis movie said he saw dead people, it was supposed to be an affliction. But dead people are all around us. We go to the country looking for woodpeckers and Orion, and we find them, but every acre is marked with footprints. The stone walls marching through the woods were assembled, stone by stone, by someone clearing a field for cattle or (God help him) planting. The winding roads that carry trucks and Subarus carried Model Ts and wagons; some of them, no doubt, carried moccasin-shod hunters. Unlike the clairvoyant boy, we will never see the dead. The books that offer to depict them are mostly frauds or tales. There is something vulgar about history, like looking for buried treasure. If you find an old artifact, an arrowhead or a rusted leg trap, it is mute. Imagination, and knowledge of ourselves, can make it speak, a little. No one is looking at us. But many ones were here, looking. Long ago, and long long ago. **NR**

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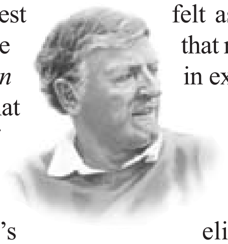
WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

Fowlerspeak-Goodspeak

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 1

IN the debate last night, Hillary Clinton pronounced herself glad that Barack Obama had brought up the subject of foreign affairs. The technique is common. It says to the audience that Clinton is aware of a deficiency in Obama and intends to exploit it for all it is worth. The danger is that it gives Obama an opportunity to turn the score on Clinton by saying that he just happens to have made his living for three years by writing on foreign affairs for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.



These verbal traps are widely used and widely counter-used. The best collection of them appears in the last few pages of Fowler's *Modern English Usage*, but of course that section is only a small part of his great work. It is worth acquainting the reader with the teeming harvest of Fowler's analysis.

He offers us, for instance, a list of words owing their vogue to the joy of showing that one has acquired them: allergic, ambience, ambivalent, catalyst, complex, equate, global, idiosyncrasy, protagonist, repercussion, seminal, streamlined.

He gives another list of words taken up merely as novel variants on a more common word: adumbrate for sketch, blueprint for plan, breakthrough for achievement, built-in for solid, ceiling for limit, claim for assert, integrate for combine, intrigue for interest, liquidate for destroy, reaction for opinion, optimistic for hopeful, redundant for superfluous, rewarding for satisfying, significant for important, sabotage for wreck, target for objective, smear for calumny.

And there are words owing their vogue to some particular occasion, plus "popularized technicalities" (words legitimately used in some scientific discipline, but brought carelessly into general use): acid test, coexistence, exponential growth, geometric progression, iron curtain, psychological moment, winds of change. And words of rhetorical appeal: archetypal, challenging, dedicated, fabulous, fantastic, massive, overtones, sensational, unthinkable.

My reluctance to quote at such length from the great Fowler is mitigated by my serious wish that students of the English language would themselves take the initiative of familiarizing themselves with the profundities and niceties of the points being made by Mr. Fowler.

So Senator Clinton will tell us that Senator Obama has no first-hand executive experience. Obama in turn will imply that the kind of experience one gets as first lady is not of the same order as one gets as president, and that he has felt as keenly as she the pulsebeat that resonates only in Congress, not in executive offices.

The viewer will have noted that it is expressions of this kind—i.e., personalized derogation and hauteur—that elicit the most vivid response from the audience. Presidential candidates no longer even try to sound like the Lincoln–Douglas debates, yet it is not bad occasionally to subject them to such analysis, to learn what it is that is not being said.

The matter of health care that has been primary in Mrs. Clinton's public career lends itself to special attention. She put forth an ambitious program when her husband was in his first term as president. But there were serious defects in that program, which her opponents were able to locate precisely because of their experience in the practical world of politics that she sought to gainsay. Those opponents, led by Rep. Newt Gingrich, were able to derail the program the Clinton administration had billed as its most important domestic initiative. And yet in Thursday night's debate Mrs. Clinton cited that plan—which she implied she would revive unchanged—as one of her principal claims to the presidency.

The two performers in the debate struck the observant conservative as intelligent, resourceful, and absolutely uninterested in the vector of political force. Both contenders should spend time on the problem of omnipotent government, and both, while entitled to criticize what has happened under President Bush, are obliged to an alert audience to speak the kind of language Fowler preached and preached in.

State of the Union: Not So Good

NEW YORK, JANUARY 30

PRESIDENT BUSH didn't give Congress, in his State of the Union address, quite what was expected, especially in the area of taxation. Several high critics of Bush, most of them running for president, spoke vociferously about the need to cut the privileges that flow to the rich through the tax laws. One critic said that the time had finally come when the tax burden should move against the wealthy.

President Bush gave them little satisfaction, in part because there is little satisfaction to be had.

Many listeners were reminded of what they had already numbly discovered for themselves, namely that the tax laws are ambiguous, not to say inscrutable. The layman has no alternative than to read proposed laws impressionistically, particularly if he is interested in the political implications. ("It favors the rich!" "It takes no realistic notice of the need to retool.")

As to practicalities, an enterprising researcher many years ago tried phoning six different IRS offices to ask how to handle a particular line on the income-tax return. He received six different answers. If professionals cannot come to the same conclusion as to what the code says, it is not surprising that calls for tax reforms have attracted adherents, reaching back to 1972 and the days of George McGovern, who made reforms a staple of his program; the movement has been carried forward ingeniously on the conservative side of the aisle by such as Phil Gramm, Dick Armey, and Steve Forbes, with various proposals for a flat income tax or a consumption tax.

The top marginal tax rate aside, there is the sheer complexity of it for those millions who must file federal income-tax returns. Many of them choose, prayerfully, tearfully, to fill out the short form. Others take the choice of hunting for all available exemptions, deductions, and depreciations, and then suffering the torment of wondering whether they took full advantage of every possibility. The exhausted, and the semi-exhausted, are asking the question: Why should it be so complicated?

The reason why tax reform is so complicated is that reformers seek out jungle leaves writhing for the sunlight, toward such rays of justice and equity as are discernible at any given moment in American politics—the moment when the action freezes, as for a photographer, for just long enough to permit one set of claimants to overshadow another. Thus a tax reform is born, and for that brief moment we have a new law that is taken as expressive of social policy. It is an assertion of justice understood as a blend of considerations: the necessities of the state, the toleration of the body politic, the relationships of power among the affected interests.

Some critics fault President Bush for not pushing harder to raise corporate taxes. At present, corporate taxes account for between 7 percent and 11 percent of all the revenues taken in by the federal government. This is down drastically from the 1950s, when corporate taxes brought in 30 percent of federal revenues. It is, however, not the tax one wants immediately to contemplate raising when we are running the largest trade deficits in history.

Bush attacked directly the so-called earmarks, and he did so persuasively. But earmarks, while the least defensible federal spending, do not account for a large proportion of the federal budget.

George W. Bush tried—flirted with—doing something about Social Security. Ronald Reagan tried—flirted with—doing something about Social Security. But real reform ran up against political walls, and so the underlying problem remains, getting worse every year. President Bush is framed by these realities—with 1½ wars going on. Some of us dare to say that his sheer decency shines through even the tangle he has to account for, and for which he bears a substantial share of responsibility.

Barack vs. Hillary

NEW YORK, JANUARY 22

Students of current events writing on Tuesday morning are expected to discover whether Mr. Obama or Mrs. Clinton is responsible for the collapse of the stock market. Because the accents in which they engaged each other on Monday night certainly asked the voters to conclude that the collapse of the stock market was the doing of one of them.

You may smile, but they are not smiling. It's true that political competitors, in a very hot race, become, well, unfriendly. When outgoing president Herbert Hoover suffered the indignity of having to ride in the same limousine with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt from the White House all the way to the Capitol, he made his feelings known during the seven-minute ride. He did not open his mouth.

Well, that's the direction in which Clinton and Obama are headed. The *New York Times* writes that the "totality of the attacks" lays bare "the ill will and competitive ferocity that has been simmering between them for weeks."

When two antagonists are required by a scheduled event to speak to their opponent, and when it is clear that they would much rather tear out the eyes of their opponent, they tend to seize on a casus belli which you and I would not think all that mortal, if directed at you or me. Mrs. Clinton railed against Obama because, she said, he never acknowledged responsibility for legislative measures that he had voted for.

He fought back by charging that the Clintons spend all night every night combing through the 4,000 votes cast by Obama in the Illinois state legislature, looking for something to criticize. By contrast, he said, he had himself attempted to maintain "a certain credibility" in the race.

Well, that brought on a charge by Hillary that Barack was tied in with a slumlord in Chicago. In fact, early in his career he had worked for a law firm that did legal work for Antoin Rezko, but that was the sum total of that connection. During this season he has already returned $40,000 in political contributions that were linked to the alleged slumlord.

Obama came back by pointing out that Mrs. Clinton had served as a (paid) director of Wal-Mart from 1986 to 1992, while he was "working on the streets of Chicago" as a community organizer. Mrs. Clinton did not have much to say about that.

The animal spirits got so hot that before long, Barack was taking on not only Mrs. Clinton but Mr. Clinton. "I can't tell who I'm running against sometimes," he said, charging that Bill Clinton had done as much as his wife to distort Obama's views and record. At several points, Obama used the phrase "Senator Clinton and President Clinton."

Well, one of the two stands a very good chance of becoming president. And it can only be said with confidence about their current contentions that not a correction will be made, in 2009, when their differences will be taken as simple campaign oratory. That is how, after the 1940 election, Wendell Willkie characterized his observations about FDR, who, during the campaign, he had said should be handcuffed, sent to Sing Sing, and deprived of bread and water.

All told, it seems a pretty conventional modern contest for power between candidates who wish to exceed each other in promises made to the voters. "Health care should be universal," said Hillary. Obama might have answered, "Success in the stock market should be universal." But there isn't anything a president can do to secure that, so if Obama wins, he'll have to settle for providing health care for Dow Jones.

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MARK STEYN

Would You Like a Hymen with That?

THE other day I got an e-mail from a British reader passing on a low-key press release. It announced that the Department for Work and Pensions had ruled that polygamous men were entitled to receive spousal welfare benefits for each of their wives. My correspondent then wondered whether I'd planted someone deep within Her Majesty's Government "who comes out with this stuff just to boost sales of your book?"

Well, no, that would be pretty expensive. Still, to reprise the line of Canadian cynics apropos James Jesus Angleton's belief that Pierre Trudeau was on the Soviet payroll: Why bother paying someone when he's prepared to do it for free? Every day around the developed world, minor government bureaucrats get advice from minor government lawyers and make small incremental adjustments to Western civilization. "Where there is a valid polygamous marriage the claimant and one spouse will be paid the couple rate," read the new British guidelines. "The amount payable for each additional spouse is presently £33.65."

You can't (for the moment) marry multiple wives within the United Kingdom, but if you contract a polygamous marriage in a jurisdiction where polygamy is legal, such as certain, ahem, Muslim countries, your better halves (or better eighths?) are now recognized as eligible for British welfare payments. Thus the concept of "each additional spouse" has been accepted both de facto and de jure.

These stories come along every couple of days, and usually involve some hitherto unforeseen intersection of Islamization and state entitlements. The other week it was the revelation that Muslim girls were getting free, ah, "hymen replacements" on the National Health Service. Apparently, some female members of the Islamic community have been, er, over-assimilating in the Britney-on-a-Saturday-night-bender sense and, while it's heartening to find Muslim gals who are indistinguishable from any homegrown Brit slattern, it can cause them some problems later on. As one expert explained, "Fundamentalism is spreading and these girls are getting sent back to their countries of origin to marry. And they will be rejected if it is found out that they are not virgins." Hence, "hymen replacement."

When these issues come up, the spokesmen for the political class focus on the question of taxpayers' money: Start handing it out to guys for third wives and to child brides for hymen replacement, and there goes any budgetary restraint. But they don't seem willing to contemplate what it means for the broader society a decade down the road. When Islam is your major source of population growth, well, then your country is going to be more Muslim. That's a given. Critics of my book *America Alone* think that I don't take into account the assimilatory powers of Western society, and it's certainly true that there's an element of cultural cross-pollination going on: You can't get polygamous welfare benefits in Waziristan, and you can't get free hymen replacement in Saudi Arabia. East is East and West is West and, though the twain do meet, a polygamist on welfare and a teen who sleeps around before going back to the old country for her arranged marriage would seem to be almost parodic definitions of the worst of both worlds.

You can't get polygamous welfare benefits in Waziristan.

Other Steyn naysayers think I'm carelessly assuming Muslims are a homogeneous bloc. Not at all. But the running is made by the most determined elements of the community, and the rest string along. So relatively few British Muslims are polygamous in practice, but even fewer will object to it in principle. Muslims have lived in the West a long time but it's only in recent years that they've demanded, say, foot-washing facilities in public buildings. And, on the whole, a multicultural society is happy to accommodate them, even to the point of preemptively giving up on stuff they haven't yet objected to—like the British prize-judges who recently nixed a new version of *The Three Little Pigs* on the grounds that it might offend Muslims.

Johann Hari, a Euroleftie who strongly objects to me, thinks there's nothing to see here: Sure, there are more Muslims around, but another decade or two and most of them will be conventional secular Eurohedonists just like everybody else. Mr. Hari is gay. After 9/11, he wrote a column for the *Guardian* boasting that he'd gone undercover at a radical London mosque and wound up seducing one of the young jihadist wannabes—"Mohammed, a rather cute 19-year old lad." Things went well, at least for Johann. "Mo was fairly easily coaxed. Of course, he felt a bit hung up about it afterwards." Still, if only Mr. Hari could work his magic on all the other cute young Mohammeds out there, he might yet save the Europe he loves.

Alas, not everyone has Johann's powers of seduction. Bruce Bawer, a gay American who moved to Europe because he found it more "tolerant" than the U.S., recently recounted an assault on his partner by two Muslim youths in Oslo. The editor of the *Washington Blade*, a gay newspaper, was beaten up in 2005 by a Muslim gang in Amsterdam, once the most "tolerant" city in Europe. Many of Europe's formerly gay-friendly cities are approaching majority-Muslim status. When that happens, the gay moment in Amsterdam and Oslo will be over.

So in the Western world the day after tomorrow there will be more polygamists and fewer gays . . . oh, and fewer Jews, too. On Britain's Holocaust-memorial day, a group of Jews in London's East End were pelted with stones by (in the current euphemism) "Asian" youths. And, whatever the respective charms of polygamists and gays, the chosen people are surely redundant. For, in one of history's bleaker jests, on an ever more Muslim continent, it's the Europeans who are the new Jews. **NR**

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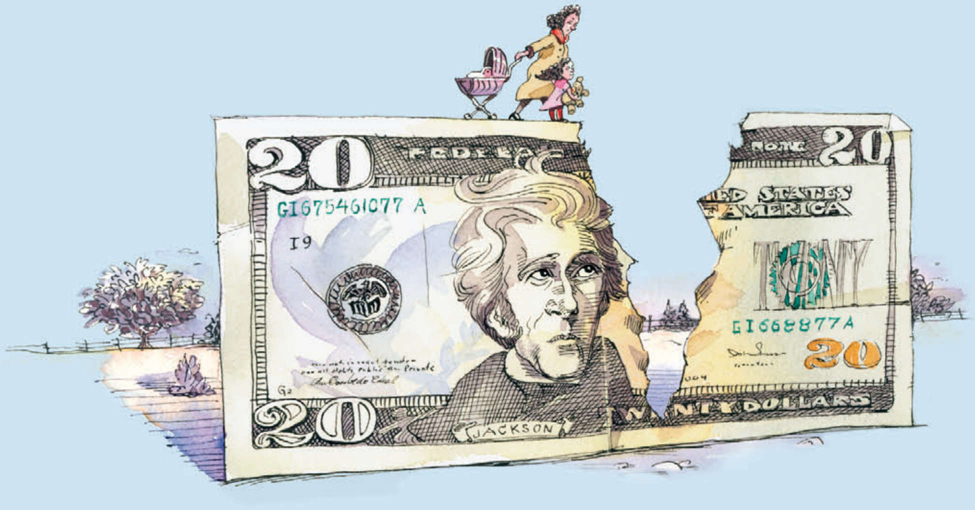
The average woman spends *11 years out of the workforce* taking care of family.

LEAVING HER WITHOUT ENOUGH RETIREMENT MONEY TO TAKE CARE OF HERSELF.



Those 11 years are spent doing important work, caring for children or elderly parents. But they can also hurt her ability to retire.

Fact is, women are still earning less than men do, and they live longer. So they need to save even more for retirement. Unfortunately, those 11 years out of the workforce put a woman even further behind, costing her an average of $659,139 in earnings.

How can we help America's women close this retirement savings gap? Allstate has some ideas:

1. MAKE EVERY EARNING YEAR COUNT.
Right now, only 47% of working women participate in a company retirement plan. American businesses can do much more to help that number grow. 401(k) strategies such as **company matches, encouraging participation by part-time workers, automatic enrollment and automatic increases in contributions as employees get raises are all proven ways to help build savings.** And the earlier an employee starts saving, the more prepared she'll be for retirement.

2. PROMOTE SPOUSAL IRAs.
Non-working women (and men) can invest up to $4,000 to grow tax-deferred in a Spousal IRA for the 2007 tax year, as long as there is a spouse in the workforce. The limit will increase to $5,000 in 2008.

3. EDUCATE: OFFER FINANCIAL SEMINARS FOR EMPLOYEES AND SPOUSES.
Knowledge is power: 53% of women (and interestingly, 33% of men) with a retirement plan said they'd **increase their annual contributions after they attended a financial education seminar.**

Women care for America. It's time we showed that America cares about their future.

Let's save retirement by saving for retirement.
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